

Gluten Free Living Secrets
Discover The Secrets To Living A Happy, Healthy Gluten-Free Life

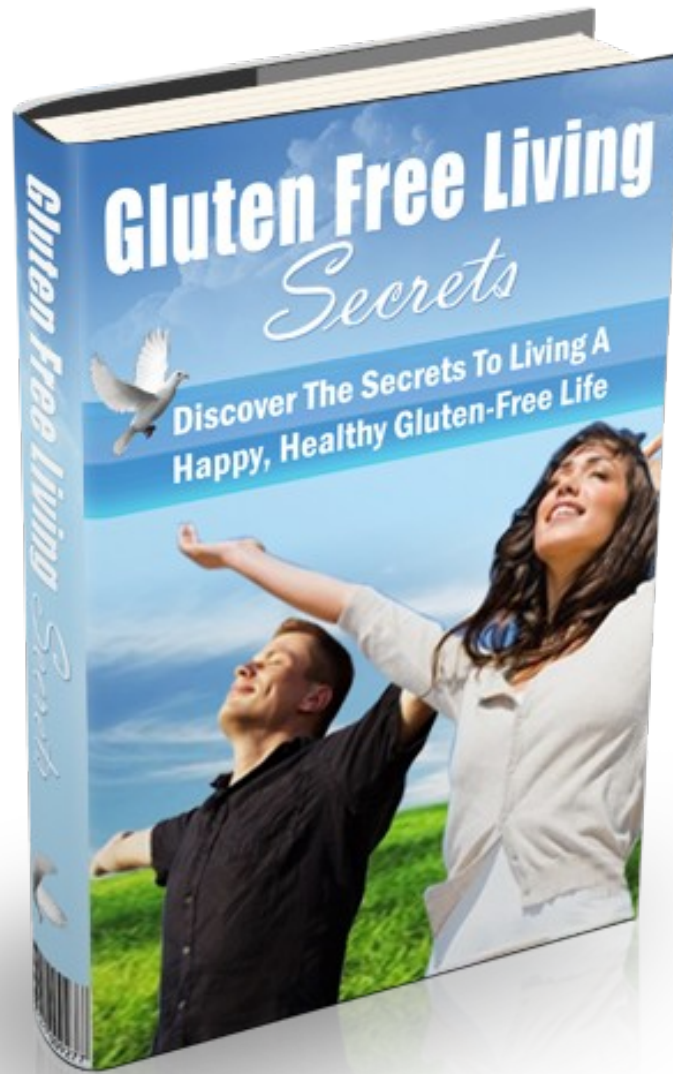


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Introduction

A gluten free diet is one that does not include foods that contain the protein known as gluten. Gluten can be found in wheat, malts, rye, triticale, and barley. It is commonly used as an additive in foods to add more flavor, to thicken foods, to stabilize foods, and is often labeled as “dextrin”. A diet free from gluten is the only type of treatment that has been medically accepted for the condition of celiac disease, wheat allergies, and dermatitis herpetiformis.

In some cases, a gluten free diet may not include oats. The medical community is not sure whether or not oats irritate celiac disease patients, or if they cause issues because of cross contamination in processing facilities.

The phrase “gluten free” is used to indicate either a complete lack, or a miniscule amount of gluten. In most cases, gluten free means there is a harmless amount of the protein since a complete absence is unlikely. For the most part, consumption of fewer than 10mg of gluten on a daily basis is unlikely to cause any allergic reactions or problems in gluten sensitive patients.

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Starting on a gluten free diet does not have to be difficult, and you do not need to feel deprived. Some basic guidelines can help you through the process.

The first step to switching your way of eating is to focus on foods you know you can have. These include vegetables and fruits, fruit juices, plain milk that has not flavored, unflavored teas, coffee beans, eggs, corn, potatoes, nuts, legumes, beans, oils, and meats and fish that are not coated, breaded, process, or marinated. You can also safely add herbs and spices, since these are quite flavorful and are completely gluten free.

Although the above mentioned grains need to be avoided, there are some grains that are safe, and gluten free. These include: Montina, Rice, Teff, Amaranth, Sorghum, Buckwheat, Quinoa, Corn, and Soy (but not soy sauce that is made from wheat).

There are also a variety of gluten free flours that can be used to make baked goods, food coatings, and other food products. This flour is made from gluten free grains that have been ground into flour, as well as nuts, beans, potatoes, and tapioca.

Today, gluten free flour can easily be found in most supermarkets, as well as health food stores. Since the gluten free lifestyle is growing in

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popularity, there are also a number of gluten free baking mixes to make cakes, muffins, breads, cookies, and the like, as well as readymade gluten free food products such as bagels, pizza, and tortillas.

Of course, let's not forget about pasta. There is now a variety of gluten free pastas that are sold in many food markets that are made from buckwheat, corn, rice, and quinoa. Noodles are also commonly made from buckwheat and are quite safe for gluten free dieters.

Why Go Gluten Free?

As previously mentioned, there are many a variety of health issues that make it necessary for some people to begin a gluten free diet. For these people, eating bread, or even having a beer can cause severe pain in the abdominal area, bloating, gas, and diarrhea.

In more serious cases, such as for those who suffer with celiac disease, eating foods that contain gluten can trigger a response by the autoimmune system that actually causes damage to the small intestine and prevents proper absorption of certain nutrients.

While these medical issues can be quite serious, and cause severe allergies for some, why on earth would anyone opt for this type of diet and give up all of their favorite foods in their traditional forms if they do not have to?

Many Hollywood stars, personal trainers, and fitness gurus are going the gluten free route, so there must be something to this mysterious diet. This section will explain some of the most common and important reasons to eliminate gluten, as well as other positive benefits for those without allergies.

What is Celiac Disease?

Celiac disease is a type of autoimmune disease that is inherited, and causes damage to the small intestine when gluten and other forms of proteins that is found in wheat, rye, barley, and in some cases, oats, is eaten.

Since symptoms of celiac disease can vary a great deal from patient to patient, a delay in a proper diagnosis is quite common. While many cases of celiac disease go undiagnosed, it is estimated that nearly one in one hundred thirty three people suffer with the condition. In some people, constipation may be the main symptom, while in others diarrhea is, and yet in many others, there is no stool irregularity.

Other common symptoms of celiac disease include: abdominal pain, gas, bloating, indigestion, a distended stomach, nausea, vomiting, a decrease in appetite, an intolerance to lactose, weight loss that cannot be explained, and stools that float, have blood in them, appear fatty, or are quite foul smelling.

Other non digestive related symptoms include: bruising easily, pain in the joints or bones, depression, children with growth delays, hair loss, fatigue, malnutrition, changes in behavior, anemia, irritability, skin problems, seizures, ulcers in the mouth, decrease in bone density, muscle cramps,

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swelling, hypoglycemia, nose bleeds, difficulty breathing or catching the breath, defects in tooth enamel or discolorations, and deficiencies in vitamins or minerals such as folate, vitamin K, or iron.

A Link Between Gluten and Autism?

Autism is a disorder that is becoming a major concern amongst parents, pediatricians, and even educators. Because this disorder seems to be becoming more common, it has sparked a great deal of debate and research into the reason behind its development. New studies, especially those that have been based in the alternative medicine field, have found that there could be a potential link between food allergies and autism, especially a link between gluten and the condition.

This new data suggest that gluten may create allergies that either cause or worsen autism.

Autism is a disorder that affects children's cognitive development and cognitive function. This can cause problems with communication abilities, behavior, and social interaction. While it was thought that autism may be genetic, recent studies have found that environmental factors may actually be cause of, or influence the disorder.

The studies that tracked autism with gluten allergies found that the food proteins in these foods were broken down into small proteins known as

peptides. This then functioned as a narcotic would in autistic children, causing outward symptoms to worsen.

Since allergic responses to gluten can affect the body on the whole, causing a variety of mental and physical symptoms, the consequences can be far reaching. “Brain fog” is considered to be a mental symptom of autism, but is also often mistaken for other psychiatric conditions.

Gluten intolerant adults are often plagued by physical symptoms of consuming gluten foods, while children tend to suffer more from mental side effects, such as brain fog.

Just as the remedy for a gluten intolerant adult is a gluten free diet, parents with children showing symptoms of mental impairment may want to consider eliminating gluten in the daily diet. Once parents cut out gluten, mental changes are often reported in a very short period of time. Cognitive problems, abnormal behavior, antisocial tendencies, and problems with communication have completely disappeared in many cases.

Top Ten Reasons to Go Gluten Free

Even if you do not have an intolerance or allergy to gluten, giving up gluten filled foods can do wonders for your health. Below are ten reasons why anyone should consider going gluten free.

If you can get nutrition from gluten, you can get it from other sources as well.

Most gluten filled grains are high in dietary fiber and various types of B vitamins. This is why so many people believe it is so important to eat these foods. What most people do not know is that if you can get this nutrition from gluten based grains, you can get it in other foods.

For example, one hundred grams of whole wheat flour provides thirty percent of the recommended allowance of niacin, and thirty two percent of the recommended allowance of thiamin. Eating sesame seeds or flaxseeds provides even more of these nutrients, while being completely gluten free.

Many foods containing gluten are also touted as being fiber rich.

This too is an issue that can easily be remedied with other foods. For example, one hundred grams of brown rice has just under two grams of fiber. In comparison, collard greens have nearly three grams of fiber, and green peas have nearly five grams of fiber.

Grains containing gluten are not good for your stomach.

When your stomach is not healthy, the rest of your body will not feel healthy because you will not be able to absorb all of the necessary nutrients from food. This in turn makes your body more prone to illness, and even at risk for becoming malnourished. Gluten filled foods have been linked to a condition known as “leaky gut syndrome”.

This means that tiny pieces of the foods are leaked out of the intestinal walls causing the body to react with an immune response. When the immune system is taxed in this way it cannot effectively fight off illnesses.

You may be unable to process gluten properly.

Many Caucasian people have a higher risk for being unable to properly digest gluten rich foods. While research has estimated that about one percent of the population has celiac disease, the numbers may actually be quite a bit higher. Some studies have estimated that nearly thirty to forty percent of people of European descent have some form or degree of gluten allergy.

Gluten causes inflammation.

Because these types of grain are high in starch, they tend to be inflammatory. The more refined grains you eat, the more inflammation is possible. Take unbleached white flour for example. This ingredient is much more inflammatory than even whole wheat flour.

That being said, foods that are gluten free such as fresh vegetables and healthy fats have been shown to reduce inflammation. People who suffer with chronic inflammation have been subjected to many different conditions such as allergies, bone loss, arthritis, asthma, cardiovascular disease, and even some types of cancer.

Gluten grains are fairly new types of food.

Even though grains containing gluten are considered to be whole foods, and nutritious, they are still relatively new to the human diet. Before the birth of agriculture, human beings simply hunted and gathered their foods. This meant eating animal protein, fish, wild berries, fruits, wild greens, nuts, and the like. Our ancestors did not plant gardens, they did not harvest grains, and they did not drink dairy products.

Humans survived on this diet for a great many years, before grains ever became introduced. Today, grains now account for the bulk of our modern diet, which has led to a variety of new health conditions.

Gluten grains can harm your joints.

As previously explained, gluten filled grains are quite inflammatory. This also wreaks havoc on your joints, leading to painful conditions

such as arthritis. These types of foods contain amino acids that mimic those already found in the joints' soft tissues.

Since both components are quite similar in makeup, the body has great difficulty telling which is natural and which is introduced. This leads to cells becoming overworked, and inflamed, which triggers the immune system to fight off foreign bodies. Unfortunately the immune system really ends up attacking the joints themselves.

Gluten grains can block minerals from being properly absorbed.

When gluten grains are not prepared properly, and in most cases today they are not, they can actually prevent vitamins and minerals from being absorbed into the body.

Even though you may be eating a diet that has plenty of calcium, iron, and other important nutrients, if you eat gluten filled grains that are not prepared correctly, you will not be able to absorb all of the foods nutrients.

The only exception to this is to sprout certain grains and eat the sprouts as this makes the grains more absorbable by the body.

Gluten grains can harm your teeth.

Grains that contain gluten have high phytate levels, which have been attributed to tooth decay. Phytates, or phytic acid, has been shown to block mineral absorption causing bacteria to feed on the starches leading to tooth decay.

Gluten grains are not good for the skin.

Glutens tend to be found in foods that are very high in carbohydrates, and while not all carbohydrates are bad, they are broken down into various types of sugars. Sugar tells the body to produce insulin, which can in turn trigger hormonal responses that cause the sebum producing glands in the skin to produce more oil. This can contribute to acne, and other skin related conditions.

Consuming gluten makes your body crave gluten.

Just about everyone has had the experience of smelling a freshly baked loaf of bread and all of a sudden craving a nice thick, warm slice. How about freshly baked cookies? A nice warm, gooey plate in front of you makes it nearly impossible to eat just one. Foods that are high in carbohydrates provide a quick burst of energy.

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However, that burst of energy wears off quickly, and then the body is left wanting more. This causes a rise and fall in insulin levels, which can lead to more and more gluten being craved, so the cycle continues.

How to Maintain a Gluten Free Diet, and Still Stay Healthy

Just as with any type of diet, a gluten free diet can be as healthy or unhealthy as you make it. That being said, you should be aware of how to make the best choices to get the very most out of your gluten free diet.

Multivitamins

A good multivitamin can be a great idea, no matter what type of diet you eat. This can help bridge any nutritional gaps in your diet, and keep you as healthy as possible. If you are not sure what type of multivitamin is best for your needs, contact your doctor or pharmacist for more information.

These professionals should be able to recommend a good option to meet your specific needs.

Constipation

The types of grains that are considered to be safe for a gluten free diet are often somewhat low in fiber. This is particularly true for rice, and rice based products. If you eat a fair amount of these foods, you body may not be getting enough fiber. To help with this issue, you can eat more fresh fruits and vegetables, which should help with constipation. You may also

need an over the counter solution in some cases; just verify it is gluten free before use.

Stay Away from Junk Food

Just because cookies, cakes, breads, and brownies advertise themselves as being gluten free, does not mean they are completely healthy. You should be just as wary of these foods as you would if they contained gluten.

Having dessert occasionally is fine. Eating sweets daily is probably not a good idea.

Think Low Carb

This does not mean that you have to go “carb crazy” and cut them out entirely. However, sticking to a lower carb diet can be beneficial, when you eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, and lean sources of protein.

Exercise

Just as with other types of diets, a good exercise program can do wonders for your health, even when on a gluten free diet. Studies show that even just thirty minutes of brisk exercise per day can be quite beneficial. A simple walk down the street, a short jog, or a play session in the back yard with your kids can raise your heart rate, burn extra calories, and make you feel better all the way around.

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Staying healthy without gluten does not have to be a big mystery. The same concepts you would incorporate into your life if you were not gluten free, essentially hold true when you are. Remember to limit refined foods, watch your junk intake, increase the amount of fruits and vegetables you eat, and get plenty of exercise. It is just that simple.

Transforming Your Pantry to be Gluten Free

One area many people who decide to go gluten free struggle with is transforming the pantry to be rid of foods they can no longer eat. As tedious as it may sound, the best way to begin the process is to take the list of ingredients that contain gluten, and read every food item's label in your kitchen.

Of course there are obvious foods such as cereal, bread, pasta, and processed items that need to be tossed. You should also check certain mixes and rice dishes as they often contain wheat thickeners.

Once you have finished with the obvious items, it is then time to check on the less obvious items. Spice blends, mixed salts, and even vanilla extract need to go. Soy sauce, condiments, and salad dressings next to be checked for problematic additives, canned soups should be checked because they often use wheat thickeners, and soup starters, broths, bouillons, and gravy mixes should all be examined.

Next, check frozen food dinners, vegetables in sauces, and prepared dishes that often list gluten on the package. If you cannot verify the ingredients, you may want to err on the side of caution and toss the item.

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From this point, you will need to decide what type of pantry you want to have. Do you want to have an entirely gluten free pantry for everyone in the family? This will mean that even those members of your family who can eat gluten will only eat gluten free foods.

If you are not sure this is the way you want to proceed, you may opt for a combined pantry. This means that there will be a separation of food items that contain gluten and those that do not, and it will be clearly set up to avoid confusion. While this may seem like the perfect compromise, you should be aware that there is always the potential that foods will be cross contaminated if the same utensils are used for serving, or containers are mixed up.

Should you opt to go completely gluten free, you should consider donating any unopened food items and canned goods to a local soup kitchen or food pantry. You may also want to see if your friends or coworkers could use the miscellaneous items such as frozen foods or spices.

Shopping Tips

The grocery store can be an intimidating place for a person who is gluten free. In order to get the most out of your shopping trip, yet ensure your food choices are completely safe, it is best to approach the store by sections.

Let's begin by taking a virtual trip around the grocery store to highlight the safest areas for gluten free shoppers.

The first stop in most grocery stores is the produce section. This section is completely safe, so you should spend a good amount of time here. Make sure you choose a variety of fresh produce, with a range of colors. Choose deep leafy greens, oranges, reds, and even purples for your diet.

The next stop is the meat section. Since meat, poultry, and fish are excellent sources of vitamins, minerals, good fats, and protein, you should be sure to choose a nice selection of items. The only items you need to steer clear of are those that are prepared, pre-coated, or marinated. You can even choose deli meats, as long as they are just plain meat, or plain cheese products.

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From here it is time to move on to the dairy section. Most items found in this department are considered to be safe. Milk, yogurt, eggs, butter, and cheese are all acceptable foods. You should opt for skim milk or whole milk products, over fat free items. Fat free foods can contain additives to make the product appear thicker, so avoiding these foods is a safe bet.

As you navigate your way around the perimeter of the store you will find the bakery is usually the next stop. Just keep on walking, since most products here are off limits!

Once you have made all of the above mentioned safe and healthy choices, you can then move on to the interior aisles of the store.

The frozen food section can be a bit daunting. Here you should stick to plain fruits, vegetables, and meat items. Stay away from products with sauces, seasonings, or coatings.

The dried and canned food aisles are safe for the most part. Again, stick to plain foods, with no extra ingredients. Dried beans are cheap and nutritious, and are packed with minerals, vitamins, and protein. Canned vegetable, fruits, beans, and juices are all safe for the most part and provide a good amount of flavor. Canned soups should be avoided as they are often thickened with wheat.

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That's it! That is all of the aisles you should be visiting while sticking to a gluten free diet. If you stick to this outline and some basic guidelines you will have successfully navigated your way through the grocery store with ease. In time, you will find it will become second nature to select food items that are both safe and nutritious.

Meal Prep Tips

Much the same as other diet plans, a good gluten free diet begins each day with breakfast. Breakfast is the most important meal of the day, and can provide a wide range of health benefits. When you are eating a gluten free diet, breakfast can also help to keep your appetite even throughout the day, making it easier to avoid craving gluten free foods.

You should always opt to keep a range of breakfast items on hand at all times, so it is never a struggle to put together a nutritious morning meal. Gluten free cereals, gluten free waffles, gluten free muffins, fresh fruit, frozen fruit, dried fruit, eggs, and gluten free cereal bars are all great options.

Once you have conquered breakfast, you need to devise a plan for lunch. Because of hectic schedules, it is not always easy to slow down and take time for the perfect lunch. By packing your lunch you will be able to know you are eating safely, eating well, saving time, and even saving money.

A thermos of gluten free soup, fresh fruit and yogurt, leftovers from dinner the night before, and vegetables with hummus are delicious lunch options. Since most of us love our snacks, you should plan to have some snacking options to keep your hunger under control. Snacks should be no more than

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one hundred to two hundred calories, and can be items such as rice crackers with peanut butter, fruit, cheese cubes, or a gluten free protein bar.

Dinner will most likely be your largest and most elaborate meal of the day. The majority of your meal should consist of freshly cooked veggies, or a nice big salad, a lean protein source, and a nice side dish such as steamed wild rice, or some beans.

Of course you can experiment as much or as little as you like, but you should try to incorporate variety to keep boredom from setting in. As long as you make your own meals with gluten free ingredients that you have stocked in your gluten free pantry you will find you look better, feel better, and can be proud you are doing something healthy for yourself and your family.

Gluten Free Snacks and Sweets

You certainly do not have to give up all of your favorite snacks and sweets just because you have decided to go gluten free. Because so many people have decided to give up gluten and get healthy, there are more products than ever on the market that are safe, and delicious.

Today, there is a full range of gluten free chips, crackers, cookies, cakes, brownies, and even candy bars. These premade convenience foods can be great for people on the go, for packing in lunches, and to help ward off those pesky cravings.

In case you would like to make some of your own gluten free snacks and sweets here are few tasty recipes to try.

Some of the Best Gluten Free Snack Recipes

Gluten Free Caramel Corn

5 quarts freshly popped popcorn

2 cups brown sugar

1 cup butter (2 sticks)

1/2 cup light corn syrup

1 teaspoon baking soda

1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar

Preheat oven to 250 degrees.

Place the popped popcorn in a large roasting pan. Place butter, sugar, corn syrup, and cream of tartar in a large pan. Heat over medium heat, until melted, stirring often to prevent burning. Bring the mixture to a boil and cook for five minutes longer, stirring continually. Remove from heat. Add baking soda and stir to mix. Carefully pour the mixture over the popcorn, and stir gently to coat. Bake the entire mixture for 1 hour, stirring every 15 minutes. Remove from the oven and pour onto a large baking sheet to cool. Break up large clumps, and enjoy!

Gluten Free Granola Bars

1 1/2 cups Gluten Free All Purpose Baking Flour

2 cups Gluten Free Rolled Oats

1/4 cup Brown Rice Farina

1 cup Apple Juice

2/3 cup Brown Sugar

2/3 cup Applesauce, unsweetened

1/2 tsp Sea Salt

1/2 tsp Cinnamon, ground

1/4 cup Canola Oil

1 tsp Vanilla

1/2 cup Pecans

3/4 cup Chocolate Chips

Spray a 9 x 13-inch pan with cooking spray. In a large bowl, stir together the flour, oats, farina, cinnamon and salt. Add the brown sugar with a fork. In a separate smaller bowl stir together the apple juice, applesauce, vanilla, and canola oil. Add the wet ingredients to the large bowl with the dry ingredients and blend well.

Stir in the pecans and the chocolate chips and pecans. Spread the mixture into the oiled pan and flatten with a spoon.

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Bake at 375°F for 30 minutes. When done, cut into 24 bars and place on two baking trays, ensuring a bit of space between the bars. Place bars back into the oven and bake an additional 10 minutes. Cool on a wire rack.

Some of the Best Gluten Free Dessert Recipes

Gluten Free Chocolate Cake

5 large eggs

8 oz unsweetened chocolate

4 oz semisweet chocolate

1 1/3 cups sugar, divided

1 cup (2 sticks) margarine

1/2 cup water

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Lightly coat a 9-inch spring form pan with nonstick cooking spray. Crack the eggs into a small glass or metal bowl and temper them over low heat on the stove, but do not cook. This will allow the eggs to triple in volume when beaten.

In a medium pan, melt the chocolate, water, 1 cup sugar, and margarine over medium heat, stirring continually. Remove from heat and let cool.

Transfer the eggs to a mixing bowl. Add the remaining 1/3 cup sugar to the eggs and beat until tripled in volume. Fold the chocolate mixture. Pour the mixture into the prepared pan and bake 30-35 minutes; it will be a little loose in center. Serve warm or room temperature.

Gluten Free Brownies

1 cup gluten free flour
2/3 cup unsweetened cocoa
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/3 cup butter or margarine (melted)
1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 cup brown sugar, packed
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1 large egg
1/3 cup hot water or brewed coffee
1/4 cup chopped walnuts (optional)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Grease or spray with cooking spray an 8 inch square nonstick pan. Stir together gluten free flour, cocoa, baking powder, and salt. Set aside. In large mixing bowl, beat butter, sugars, and the egg with an electric mixer on medium speed until well combined. With mixer on low speed, add the dry ingredients, along with the hot water or coffee. Blend well; mixture will

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be somewhat thick. Stir in walnuts, if desired. Spread batter in prepared pan and bake 20 minutes. Cool the brownies on a wire rack before cutting.

Keeping Kids Happy Around Their Gluten Eating Friends

Children are often the most difficult people to manage when it comes to maintaining a gluten free diet. This is because they like to go out with their friends, go to pizza parties, go to the movies, and all the while do not want to constantly worry about eating foods that may have gluten. When told they cannot have them at all, they feel completely isolated from their gluten eating friends.

So how can you keep kids happy around their friends, but still maintain a gluten free lifestyle?

The main key is to plan ahead. When your child is going to a birthday party, bring a few gluten free cupcakes so he or she can eat a sweet treat with the rest of the kids.

If going out to a pizza restaurant, call ahead and find out if they offer gluten free options, and order a special pizza just for your child. When the child goes to a friend's house for a sleepover, pack a backpack for him or her that is loaded with gluten free chips, gluten free cookies, gluten free brownies, and other fun snacks. This will allow for the full friend experience while still maintaining a safe and healthy lifestyle.

Eating Out While Staying Gluten Free

Just as your child may feel a bit out of place or deprived when going out with his or her friends, you too may feel a bit awkward when going out to dinner with a group of friends or colleagues. Luckily, this issue is much easier to deal with today than in years past.

The first thing that you should do is check with the restaurant in advance to find out if they offer gluten free menu options. More and more local restaurant and even large chains do offer these options.

Be sure to be polite, courteous, and friendly with the wait staff. Take your time and clearly explain your dietary needs, and what you would like; most of the time it is no problem at all.

Make sure you choose options on the menu that are sensible. Choose straightforward foods that you know all of the ingredients. Stay away from dishes with sauces and marinades. When ordering dessert, opt for sherbet, sorbet, ice cream, or a fresh fruit platter.

Eating out while maintaining a gluten free lifestyle does not have to be torture; with a little bit of planning and preparation, you will be able to dine with everyone else without a bit of trouble.

Conclusion

Hopefully this information has shown you how easy and how many health benefits there are to taking up a gluten free lifestyle. From lowering your risk for certain diseases, to having healthier children, and even having fewer digestive issues, there are a number of reasons to cut gluten from your diet.

Since more and more people are beginning to see the light and take part in this diet, the food choices have gotten more plentiful, restaurants have come on board, and meals are quite delicious.

In time you will realize this diet is quite simple and takes just a bit of extra planning, but the difference you will feel in your own body will astound you!