



Nutrition Nibbles

Is Gluten-Free Good for You?

Activity Trackers: What can a gadget do for you?

Gluten-free dining continues to be all the rage but is it actually good for you? Gluten, a protein found in wheat, barley and rye, gives most grain-based food its desired chewy texture. For a small percentage of the population with celiac disease, about 1% of Americans according to the National Foundation for Celiac Awareness, consuming gluten can destroy the lining of the small intestine leading to disruption of digestion and poor absorption of nutrients.

If only 1% of the population suffers from celiac disease, why is everyone shopping in the gluten-free section of the grocery store? Eating gluten-free is the latest weight loss craze. According to NDP [Market Research] Group, a gluten-free diet appeals to 30% of Americans and these folks are NOT pursuing this strict diet out of medical necessity. While many people do lose weight on a gluten-free diet (perhaps because they are cutting out processed foods and reading nutrition labels), others actually gain weight on a gluten-free diet! Why? Aren't gluten-free foods healthier for you? Not necessarily!

Gluten functions to improve the texture, consistency, and mouth feel of foods. No other food or ingredient can provide quite the same results. To make many gluten-free foods more appealing, additional ingredients are added—namely sodium (salt), sugar, and fat. Gluten-free foods often have just as many, if not more, calories than their gluten-containing counterparts. In addition, many naturally gluten-free foods are poor food choices from a nutrient perspective. Potato chips and ice cream may be gluten-free but shouldn't be part of an all-you-can-eat gluten-free diet. Consequently, if a person follows a gluten-free diet haphazardly, they may fall short in certain B vitamins, amino acids, and fiber.

Bottom Line: While a gluten-free diet is critical for those suffering from a true gluten intolerance, it may not be the smartest health move for the rest of us. Your best bet is to eat a whole foods diet, filled with a variety of unprocessed foods that you prepare in proper portions in your own kitchen.

Do you need to step up your activity level but feel unmotivated? Do you believe you're an active person but can't seem to lose those last few pounds? Are you looking for something, *anything*, to make exercise seem like less of a chore? Are you inspired by tracking your goals, like miles walked, steps taken, or calories burned? If you answered "yes" to any of the above questions, an activity tracker might be the answer to your plight.

Today's activity trackers by companies like Nike, FitBit, and Garmin go beyond measuring steps taken. They track mileage, calories burned, active minutes, flights of stairs, heart rate, and hours slept among other things. For an average of \$100-\$200, you can be well on your way to a healthy body. This small investment in yourself can lead to great returns on your health. The American College of Sports Medicine highlights the link

**Questions or Comments? Email me at
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O.M.G. (Oh My Gluten)

Gluten and gluten-containing foods can be good for you! Here's a list of gluten-based health benefits:

1. Gluten contributes to healthy gut bacteria. Gut bacteria protect us from intestinal cancer and inflammatory conditions. In fact, people following a gluten-free diet may not have as many beneficial bacteria populating their gut.
2. Gluten lowers triglycerides, or fats found in the bloodstream that contribute to heart disease. In a small, randomized study, participants who ate a high gluten diet dropped their triglycerides by 13%, while maintaining their weight.
3. Gluten can help lower your low density lipoprotein or LDL ("lousy") cholesterol. Another well-controlled study found that participants eating a high gluten diet not only dropped their triglyceride levels but their bad LDL cholesterol as well.
4. Gluten may drop your blood pressure. Gluten's protein, gliadin, may aid the blood pressure lowering effects of whole grain foods.
5. Gluten might boost overall immunity. Gluten is rich in a particular amino acid, glutamine, that has been used to improve healing in post-operative patients. A small study showed an increase in natural killer cell activity (this is a good thing!) after consuming gluten for several days. Increased natural killer cell activity protects against tumor development and viral infections.

Read the Research:

Gluten-Free Diet: Imprudent Dietary Advice for the General Population? by Glenn A. Gaesser, PhD and Siddhartha S. Angadi, PhD
Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, September 2012, Volume 112, Number 9, pp.1330-1333.

Greens + Beans + Grains = Summer Salad

Try one of these winning combinations for a fresh and tasty lunch or dinner side option.

Spinach +	Kidney + Beans	Quinoa +	Fresh Dill + Fresh Mint	Lemon Juice, Olive Oil
Arugula +	Cannellini + Beans	Brown + Rice	Cilantro + Fresh Dill	Orange Zest, Lemon Juice, Olive Oil
Spinach +	Black Beans +	Barley +	Parsley +	Balsamic Vinegar, Olive Oil

Trackers continued...

between physical activity and cancer prevention. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that prediabetics get a minimum of 150 minutes of exercise per week to prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes. The American Heart Association also votes for 30 minutes of activity 5 days each week to improve cardiovascular health. From weight management to mood enhancement, from boosting energy to improving sleep, an active lifestyle is where it's at.

A fun activity tracker can encourage you to get off the couch, pick up the pace, take the stairs, and go to bed early. Check out this article and video on choosing the activity tracker that's best for you: [5 Things You Didn't Know About Activity Trackers](#).



Photo: danlangendorf.com