

# Free essay on what is a gluten-free diet

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Thesis: Gluten-free diet is actually not very helpful for patients who have Celiac Disease and is not a healthy diet substitute for those who do not have Celiac.

Diet experts continue to debate on the above subject and while the debate goes on, the market keeps getting flooded with gluten free products, claiming to do wonders for your health. One will need to look into the matter deeply to see if ditching gluten is a wise idea or one should include it in their dietary habits. The main purpose of the paper is to look at the pros and cons of the gluten-free diets available in the market and make the best choices for the Coeliac patients.

A gluten-free diet is a diet that is free of the protein gluten. Gluten is found in wheat, barley and rye. In medical practice, the word- gluten is used for only the wheat and rye glutens. The gluten found in maize is harmless, and oats have very low percentage of gluten. The role of gluten found in oats is still under study and at present, oats are not excluded from the gluten free diet. COUNTERARGUMENT

Admittedly, there is some truth to the thesis that Gluten-free diet is actually not very helpful for patients who have Coeliac, but many children with the coeliac syndrome have been treated successfully with a diet free of wheat and rye. For people suffering from celiac disease, the gluten present in their diet causes inflammation in the small intestines. Thus, they are recommended a gluten-free diet to treat the condition, prevent complications and control symptoms.

The Coeliac Syndrome Studies have established that it is the wheat and rye gluten that is harmful and further reports have established the efficiency of a

gluten-free diet in children with the coeliac syndrome (Fletcher and McCririck, 299-301). The actual fact of the matter is that the withdrawal of gluten from the diets of patients suffering from coeliac restored the normal intestinal functioning. It seems to be a general experience that a low level of gluten intake should be maintained to keep gluten-induced enteropathy under control. However, it may be essential for a gluten-free diet to be continued for a long time.

Gluten is used to define a mixture of wheat storage proteins - prolamins and glutenins. However, toxic prolamins carry gliadin in wheat, hordein in barley and secalin in rye (Saturni et al, 16-34) These proteins are resistant to degradation by gastric juices in the human intestinal membrane. The result is the accumulation of large peptide fragments that can induce mucosal damage. Patients suffering from celiac disease also show malabsorption of iron, folate, and calcium.

Celiac disease is the most common enteropathy in humans that is caused by foods. It is because of the intolerance to gluten that presents a vast variety of symptoms such as gastrointestinal and extra-intestinal manifestations. At pediatric age, the disease may show no symptoms. Typical clinical appearances are chronic diarrhea, anemia, weight loss that is chiefly due to malabsorption as a result of intestinal villous atrophy (Lamacchia et al, 575-90). Another reason that disagrees with the thesis is that the only cure for celiac patients is found to be a lifelong diet free of gluten. Thus, gluten avoidance is strongly recommended and one must not take foods and products that contain wheat flour, rye, barley, triticale or with ingredients from these flours. There are several foods that contain wheat or the gluten

derivatives used as thickeners, for example, some types of cheese, salad dressing, sauces, cold cuts, etc. There are medicinal products that also use gluten as a binder in the tablets or pills. All these products carrying gluten in any percentage are to be avoided by the celiac patients.

A Gluten-free Diet that is high on nutrition It is true that a gluten-free diets doesn't not promise high nutrition. Flour is a central source of protein, thiamine, calcium, iron, and nicotinic acid. These nutritional elements are lost in a diet lacking flour. Gluten flour is almost pure wheat starch. In practice the nutritional value of a gluten-free diet might be lower. It is tough to measure the nutritional consequences of the withdrawing wheat flour from an individual's diet. There is a possibility of the deficiency in folic-acid intake from a gluten-free diet.

Admittedly, there is some truth to this statement of gluten-free diets being low on nutrition, it is possible to create a nutritionally adequate diet without using any wheat or rye flours. However, the main challenges here are that the flour is used in so many processed foods. The construction of a gluten-free diet needs careful considerations. With time and changes in practice, as well as the availability of gluten-free products, there might be several modifications. There is a risk of ingesting wheat flour as it is used in processing only recommended brands of oat. The percentage of various nutrients in the cereals diet has risen slightly. However, a supplement can be given to the individual.

Images source: Outspokenonhealth. com Noteworthy advancement has been made in the preparation of gluten-free products, but these still carry a low nutritional value. Moreover, these diets tend to be expensive too. In the

recent times, there is a deeper research going on in how to develop gluten-free products that are high in nutrition and affordable. Gluten-free foods made with corn and rice starch carry a high glycemic index. Research shows that the daily consumption of high glycemic index can develop cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and obesity. In order to make bread and pasta, the gluten proteins in wheat flour play a very crucial role in lending the dough its viscosity and elasticity. In addition, wheat offers nutritional value too as it contains dietary fiber, vitamins, and minerals. It is a thought-provoking task for the industry to create high-quality gluten-free foods such as baked products, pasta, bread, etc. replacing the unique technological properties of wheat gluten. Thus, there is an element of truth in the statement of gluten-free diet being low on nutrition.

Despite numerous studies, it is still not possible to create an alternative diet therapy for the celiac patients that is free of gluten and high on nutrition.

Research needs to look for options like detoxified wheat flour or use wheat varieties with low content of toxic gluten as a dietary therapeutic alternative. These food products high on nutrition could be used by not only those suffering gluten intolerance, but also by the rest of the population.

Based on the interview with Anna, she shares that eating gluten-free is much tougher, and it is not as simple as it is made out to be. Now that she knows that she is suffering from celiac, she focuses more on the raw products like fruits and vegetables. She can make a delicious fruit salad and with a little creativity and imagination, one can get used to the idea of having gluten-free food. With the market flooded with gluten free diets, but that doesn't mean that they are high on nutrition.

Thus, contrary to the thesis, eating a diet free of gluten need not be devoid of nutrition (Anna). Sometimes those foods free of wheat are loaded with sugar and refined grains. Thus, according to Anna, one has to be careful when picking their gluten free foods.

**Image source: (Fletcher and McCrirk, 299-301).**

Most celiac experts agree about advising people with celiac disease to follow a life-long gluten free diet. However, the concern here is not to discuss the need of a gluten free diet in case of celiac conditions, but the general wellness in a gluten free lifestyle. Controversy and confusion often arise when the patient is not able to follow the strict diagnostic criteria.

The director of the Center for Celiac Research, University of Maryland School of Medicine estimates that about 6% of Americans are sensitive to gluten (McCardle). The gluten-free diet is looked upon as a science backed diet out to benefit everyone. The gluten free business is touching more than two billion in sales, and there are hundreds of gluten-free products on shelves. The fear of gluten has also led to the production of mediocre quality of gluten free breads, cakes and cookies. However, I feel that a gluten-free lifestyle is life-saving for the minority of population that suffers from Celiac. As a result, one finds tablets and pills appearing on market shelves that promise to defend against hidden gluten. One is advised to take a pill with each meal that contains casein or gluten. While these enzymes may help with a few molecules of gluten, this can be dangerous for anyone with celiac disease. Admittedly, there are Pharmaceutical companies spending millions of dollars to come out with an enzyme-based drug to help people with celiac disease to eat gluten. The fact of the matter is that, at present the only

solution lies in the gluten free diets for the coeliac patients. Role of Media Media is always buzzing on gluten-free diets, and there are reports comparing the nutrition facts of gluten-containing diets and the gluten-free alternatives. With a higher demand of the gluten-free options, one finds the restaurants and caterers catering to the rising demands. It is not uncommon to hear about gluten-free wedding cake or other goodies. Specialty bakeries and caterers are losing no time to cash in on the steady and growing, demand. Some of them are even coming up with sophisticated vegan variety to cater to the increasing gluten-free requests. Linton). Gluten free products have exploded in the local bakeries and marketplace, and one can have gluten-free loaves made from potato or rice flours (Linton). There is something written about gluten-free diet in the newspaper or magazines every other day.

The truth is that a lot many myths and misconceptions are now circulating in the market, thanks to the half-baked truths about gluten from the media. Why people opt for the gluten-free diet is as they claim for higher energy along with loss in weight. Many people do experience weight loss and higher energy levels after following a gluten-free diet, but it may be because of what foods they replaced. If they are substituting white bread with a high-fiber grain, they are going to experience weight loss. However, if they are switching to potato starch in place of wheat flour, their weight will show no decrease. . Most people increase their intake of fruits and vegetables and lower their over-all consumption of processed foods, when they start their gluten-free diet. The weight decline could be due to the elimination of high-calorie foods, and not because of the gluten-free diet. Celiac patients are

thin not because of their diet but because of the difficulties with malabsorption. Moreover, there are always some risk involved with following a gluten-free diet

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