

Gluten Free? Not Just a Fad

By Dr. Veronica Collings

Gluten is the protein portion of primarily four grains: wheat, rye, barley and, on a lesser scale, oats. From digestive distress to Alzheimer's, gluten has been implicated as at least a contributory, if not the outright, cause of every symptom and syndrome of which you can think. Why is that? And, more interestingly, why so prevalent now? After all, who ever heard of gluten, 20 years ago?

The "why" is that gluten causes inflammation in varying degrees in predisposed individuals. The degree to which it affects one determines the severity of the symptom picture. An individual's weak link will also determine what is hit first or hardest.

The "why now" requires a little historical perspective. It's believed that *homo erectus*, the first upright man, appeared about two million years ago. For the subsequent 1,990,000 of those years, man ate what he hunted and gathered. Then, roughly 10,000 years ago, Egyptians began to domesticate grasses, which led to pasta and bread.

Given that our current genetic makeup is thought to be about 30,000 years old, the introduction of grains is a relatively new phenomenon to our genome. There was always a small percentage of people that hadn't fully adapted to grains. They were the people who gained weight easily and/or suffered from a lot of food-related symptoms – certain populations more likely than others. Eastern Europeans, as well as Irish, had a greater preponderance to this sensitivity.

Then came 1996. That was the year that Monsanto received permission from the FDA (which is headed by an ex-Monsanto vice president, by the



way) to increase the percentage of gluten of our commonly consumed grains by 15%. Voila, mystery solved. So, for those of us who were perhaps under the radar, experiencing just minor irritation from this food variant, all of a sudden, minor became major.

To add insult to injury, your medical doctor will not be able to validate this for you if you suspect that it could apply to you. Medical doctors don't typically have any training in nutrition, so to look to food as a causative agent is not on their radar. Celiac disease is what they assume is the only possibility and celiac is not the same thing. Celiac disease is an autoimmune disorder triggered by wheat, but it presents with antibodies, and that's what your doctor will look for – not necessarily the same for a gluten intolerant person, although someone can be both.

So what to do? If you suspect that this may be you, it requires a 30-day, 100% elimination of all foods containing the above grains or gluten additives. I know that 100% is a big number, but it is necessary. In that first month, you are trying to make a determination about your response to

withdrawing from gluten intake. The bad news is that it only takes one-tenth of one gram to get the inflammatory reaction going again. Imagine that you are a house on fire. The firefighter (you, eliminating gluten) is putting the fire out. The fire is going out nicely when someone puts in some kerosene. It doesn't take much kerosene to get the fire going full force again, does it? Well, that's how this allergic response works. You really have to go 100% for a full month to really know. If your symptoms also include mental or neurological problems, it may take up to three months to fully see how much of that is gluten. Dr. David Perlmutter, a neurologist with 35 years' experience, states in his book *Grain Brain* that, if you are gluten intolerant, you are 265% more likely to suffer from depression. Dyskinesia, a neurological disorder where people have uncontrolled movements from facial ticks to flailing limbs, have totally resolved with just this abstinence. I wouldn't have believed it either, except that I have a patient who experienced this exact phenomenon. I also recommend apps for your smart phones. "GF Living" and "GF Scanner" can help greatly to navigate these uncharted waters. There is more to this subject – feel free to delve further. I also recommend Dr. David Williams' book, *Wheat Belly*, and Dr. Robb Wolf's *The Paleo Solution*. These are great examples of what is possible. Along these lines, there is a great movie on Amazon Prime, *The Perfect Human Diet*, which can expand your understanding of the benefits of this effort.

Good luck and feel free to call my office for more information.