

Glutton FOR GLUTEN

GLUTEN IS BAD, BUT ONLY FOR A SPECIFIC GROUP OF PEOPLE.

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You may have seen the word "Gluten-Free" on the packaging of some products at the supermarket. These products are typically marketed as being healthier and some of us blindly adhere to a gluten-free diet thinking that it is better for our system. But actually, gluten is not as bad as it is perceived to be. It is essential to understand what exactly gluten is, what it does for us and whether or not we need to go totally gluten free.

WHAT IS GLUTEN?

Gluten is the protein found naturally in wheat, rye, barley. This protein is made up of two fractions, the insoluble which is glutenin and the soluble being gliadin. Oats has been routinely avoided in a gluten-free diet. The grain on its own is gluten-free, however in many instances, oats are usually cultivated near the wheat, rye and barley plantations which lends itself to cross-contamination. Nonetheless, there are gluten-free oats in the market, just check the labels.



WHO NEEDS TO GO ON A GLUTEN-FREE DIET?

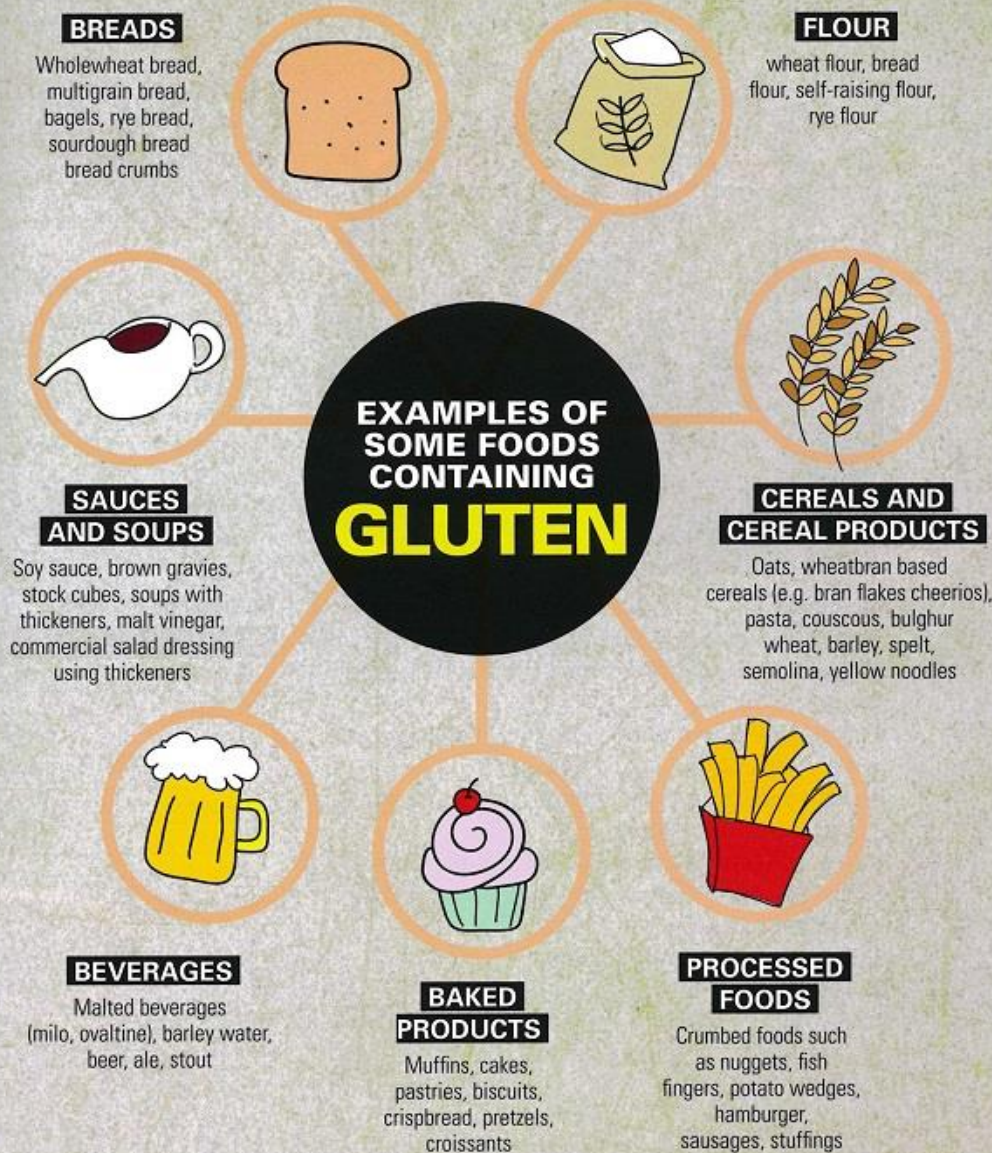
For runners who are healthy and have a normal digestive tract, there is no harm to them when they ingest foods that contain gluten. Adhering to a gluten-free diet is only beneficial if you suffer from coeliac disease or any related medical condition.

It is the gliadins in gluten that are harmful to the people with coeliac disease. Coeliac disease is the autoimmune medical condition that is caused by an abnormal sensitivity to

gluten in susceptible individuals. The way in which gliadins damages the mucosal lining is unknown but it is thought to be an immune mechanism by the body. People with coeliac disease cannot tolerate even the smallest amount of gluten. Gluten will cause inflammation of the small intestine triggering an immune response. This damages the lining of the small intestine and interferes with the absorption of food. This results in the development of nutrient deficiencies and lead to anaemia, osteoporosis and delayed growth. Runners who have coeliac disease need to seek help for the nutritional management of this disease. Lifelong avoidance of gluten is the only treatment for coeliac disease.

COELIAC DISEASE SYMPTOMS AND DIAGNOSIS

Coeliac disease can be identified through a series of blood tests and further investigations to be confirmed by a biopsy of the small intestine. Common symptoms include fatigue, diarrhoea, bloatedness, indigestion, abdominal pain, muscle pain, runny nose, anaemia, eczema and bone pain. For coeliacs, these symptoms are not life threatening but there is a high level of discomfort and symptoms can appear anytime from 30min-24hr upon ingestion of any product containing gluten.



GLUTEN FREE

EXAMPLES OF SOME GLUTEN-FREE FOODS

BREADS

Gluten-free bread

CEREALS AND

CEREAL PRODUCTS

Gluten-free pasta, gluten-free oats, rice, corn or soy based cereals such as rice crispies and cornflakes, polenta, buckwheat, quinoa, rice noodles

FLOUR

Rice, corn, potato, tapioca, soya, arrowroot, amaranth, millet, sago

BAKED PRODUCTS

Rice crackers, rice cakes, biscuits or cakes made from gluten-free flours

PROCESSED FOODS

Plain popcorn, plain corn chips

SAUCES AND SOUPS

Gluten-free soy sauce, clear soups with no thickeners, tomato sauce, gluten-free gravies, balsamic vinegar

BEVERAGES

Water, tea, coffee, milk, cordials, fruit juices, wine, liquors

Gluten intolerance is a category of gluten-related problems. The three main problems are coeliac disease, non-coeliac gluten sensitivity and wheat allergy. Coeliac disease is the autoimmune disorder. Non-coeliac gluten sensitivity does not damage the lining of the small intestine but invokes the same physical symptoms when gluten is being ingested. Wheat allergy is when the body reacts of Immunoglobulin E antibodies usually caused by proteins in wheat; albumin and globulin in wheat and to a lesser extent, gliadin and glutenin. It can be life-threatening for those who are highly allergic to wheat. For all three

conditions, avoiding gluten is best way to prevent symptoms and complications.

GLUTEN NUTRITION

Gluten itself does not have much nutritional benefits, but it is the foods that contain gluten that can be nutritious. Gluten is found in healthy and not-so-healthy foods as seen in the table. Just like any fad diet, the novelty of such a diet gained traction of late and runners jumped onto the gluten-free bandwagon. But is it really essential? Unknown to many, some gluten-free foods could be less healthy because food manufacturers have to impart more fat and sugar to

replace the loss of fluffiness and texture. Therefore careful planning and selection of foods are important.

There is no real advantage for runners to follow a gluten-free diet unless they are diagnosed to be gluten intolerant. It is complex and time consuming. They should spend more effort in training and improving performance rather than deciphering which foods they need to avoid. There is nothing intrinsically healthier about a gluten-free diet than a normal varied diet. Many runners perceive a gluten-free diet to be healthier but this is not the case. A poorly planned gluten-free diet will lack B vitamins, zinc,

iron, magnesium and fibre that are totally unnecessary. These nutrients tend to be found more abundantly in grains and wheat flour-based products which are carbohydrate foods. Runners require carbohydrate as their staple and main source of energy. The most common types of breads and cereals available would need to be avoided resulting in a lowered carbohydrate intake. The consequences are a reduced energy level and poorer running performance.

Having said that, if a runner is gluten-intolerant, it is still possible to have a healthy balanced diet but he or she would need to consult with a sports dietitian to plan their meals properly to prevent nutrient insufficiencies and have a sufficient supply of energy for race or training sessions. This would mean ensuring the right amounts of dairy, fruits and vegetables to meet daily requirements of nutrients.

GLUTEN, OR GLUTEN-FREE?

In summary, gluten-free diets are only necessary for runners who have adverse reactions to gluten and they require advice from a sports dietitian to plan their meals well. For runners who have no problems with digesting breads, cereals and flour based products, there is no reason to go gluten-free. **R**

CHICKEN BROWN RICE BEEHOON SOUP

(SERVES: 2)



Ingredients

60g dry brown rice beehoon
2 tablespoons canola oil
80g firm tofu (tau kwa)
2 cloves garlic, finely minced
2 shallots, finely minced
8 fresh shiitake mushrooms, sliced
3 cups home-made chicken broth
8 snow peas
1 cup chye sim
White pepper to taste
200g pan fried chicken thigh meat, shredded
Sliced red chilli to garnish

Directions

1. Boil the bee hoon for 1-2 minutes, drain, and set aside.
2. Pan-fry the firm tofu with 1 tablespoon of oil till golden brown. Drain and set aside.
3. Heat 1 tablespoon of canola oil and fry the garlic and shallots till fragrant.
4. Add in the mushrooms and fry for 2 minutes. Add in the chicken broth. Bring to the boil.
5. Add in the chye sim and snow peas. Add pepper to taste.
6. To serve, add the noodles in a bowl, and top with the shredded chicken and tofu.
7. Ladle the soup on top of the noodles.
8. Serve with chilli, desired.

Nutrition Information

Nutrient	Per Serving
Energy (kcal)	380
Protein (g)	35
Total Fat (g)	11.9
Saturated Fat (g)	2.3
Cholesterol (mg)	77
Carbohydrate (g)	33.2
Dietary Fibre (g)	6.7
Sodium (mg)	531

POLENTA AND OATS WITH GARLIC LIME PRAWNS

(SERVES: 2)

Ingredients

1 cup dried polenta
½ cup rolled oats
Pinch of salt
3 cups of water
1 tablespoon of oil

Prawns

10 prawns, de-shelled
1 tablespoon of garlic
1 tablespoon of lime juice
½ tablespoon chilli, chopped (optional)

Salsa

1 tablespoon of shallots
½ cup chopped tomatoes
1 tablespoon lime juice
1 cup chopped capsicum

Nutrition Information

Nutrient	Per Serving
Energy (kcal)	377
Protein (g)	26.4
Total Fat (g)	11.0
Saturated Fat (g)	1.1
Cholesterol (mg)	142
Carbohydrate (g)	42.9
Dietary Fibre (g)	4.0
Sodium (mg)	533



Directions

Boil water. Turn down heat to a simmer and stir in the polenta and salt. Let it cook for 5-7 min then turn heat off.

1. In a square tin, pour the mixture and let it set for ten min.
2. Marinade the prawns with lime garlic, lime juice and chilli.
3. Mix salsa ingredients together and set aside.
4. Cut the polenta mixture into squares. Heat a pan and pan-fry each piece till golden brown.
5. Grill the prawns on a grill pan.