



Gluten Linked to Autoimmune Disease, Bowel Diseases and More

Sara Kittaneh*

Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics, United Arab Emirates

***Corresponding Author:** Sara Kittaneh, Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics, United Arab Emirates.

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You may be wondering how something so mainstream could be harmful to your gut. Wouldn't we all be sick? Well, unfortunately, it has become mainstream to have a chronic illness such as heart disease, cancer, or an autoimmune disease and the rates are rising. Gluten has been linked to more than 55 diseases and an estimated 99% of people who have either celiac or non-celiac gluten sensitivity are never diagnosed.

Gluten-containing food products make up a major portion of the typical American's diet. Most people take in between 5 and 20 grams of gluten per day. Some people have to avoid gluten because of food allergies or gluten sensitivities, but millions are eradicating gluten for other reasons. So, is all of this relatively new talk of going gluten-free stemming from legitimate concerns, or is this just a fad? Is gluten really bad for you? Here's what science says about the topic so far.

Gluten may worsen certain autoimmune conditions

Some types of autoimmune conditions can be exacerbated by gluten intake. Rheumatoid arthritis, type I diabetes, Grave's disease and Hashimoto's disease are all examples of autoimmune diseases that have been shown to be affected by gluten intake. Multiple studies have been published between 1964 and 2016 regarding the effect of gluten on autoimmune diseases, and some theories suggest gluten can be an intrinsic factor in the development of such diseases. Gluten can mimic certain antigens when it enters the body, which can trigger an autoimmune response.

Gluten has been linked to specific bowel disease

The way in which gluten breaks down in the intestines is why it can come along with issues like gas and bloating for some people. The proteins contained in gluten are resistant against existing pro-

tease enzymes found in the intestines, so they break down slower. People who already have certain bowel diseases like irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) or Chron's disease are often highly sensitive to gluten. However, science suggests that gluten could be more linked to such conditions than what is currently known. Gluten increases intestinal permeability because of its slow breakdown, and it is suspected this can lead to symptoms of certain bowel diseases.

To come to the point

Every time we eat, we have the opportunity for food to either fuel disease or act as our most powerful medicine.

Autoimmunity has increased threefold over the last 50 years, and it currently affects between 50 and 75 million Americans. It is the third leading chronic illness in the US, right behind heart disease and cancer. And it accounts for over \$100 billion annually in healthcare costs.

Some choose to avoid gluten because they feel better by doing so, and others follow a gluten-free nutrition plan because they have to. As always, it is best to discuss any drastic dietary changes with your primary care physician beforehand.

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