

MINUTE NUTRITION NEWS

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Do You Need To Eat Gluten-Free?

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Popularity with gluten-free products have been steadily on the rise. People follow this diet for different reasons: as medical treatment, as a way to “clean up” unwanted eating habits, improve digestion, or even help with weight loss. As much as that “gluten-free” label on the food package makes us feel like we are eating healthier, there are important considerations into whether this diet is right for you.

Why Eat a Gluten-Free Diet?

The gluten-free diet exists is because 1 in 133 people in Canada have a condition called Celiac Disease. People with Celiac Disease cannot eat gluten because it causes an autoimmune reaction and damages the absorptive surface of the small intestine. Other individuals have a condition called Non-Celiac Gluten Sensitivity. These individuals experience similar symptoms as those with Celiac Disease, but without the autoimmune response and damage seen in their small intestines.



In a nutshell, the gluten free diet is a strict restriction from gluten, the protein found in food products containing wheat, barley and rye. People with Celiac Disease or Non-Celiac Gluten Sensitivity need to strictly follow a gluten-free diet because it is the only way to either allow healing in the small intestines and/or for symptoms to improve. For the rest of us who do not have these conditions, gluten is a naturally existing protein in our foods and does not need to be avoided.

Why You May Not Want to Start a Gluten Free Diet

If you suspect that you have Celiac Disease or Non-Celiac Gluten Sensitivity, the most important step is to speak with your healthcare provider about your concerns **before** making any changes in your diet. This is because gluten has to be in your diet in order for you to be properly diagnosed. Celiac Disease can affect other areas of your health so getting a proper diagnosis is important for you and your health care provider to properly monitor for any changes in your health.

A gluten-free diet is also complicated and expensive to follow. Food restrictions involve a lot more than cutting out bread and pasta. It also involves extensive label reading, and being very careful with cross contamination in the foods you buy, when eating out or at home. A proper diagnosis will make sure you have the necessary resources to support you in eating a gluten-free diet.

What Can You Do?

If you are looking to adopt healthier eating habits, improve digestive health, or manage your weight, you can do all of this without needing to follow a restrictive gluten-free diet. Sure, incorporating a few gluten-free items won't hurt, but most people find improvements in their health simply because of the following “side effects” of eating gluten-free:

- 1) Eating less processed foods that are high in sugar and fat (processed foods usually contain hidden sources of gluten);
- 2) Eating more fresh foods such as vegetables, fruits, nuts, lean protein, and dairy as these are all naturally gluten free;
- 3) Stick to your recommended 6-8 servings of grain products each day (i.e. breads and pasta may not be the culprit of your health concerns but rather *too much* breads and pasta may be the problem).

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

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Crispy Spiced Chickpeas

Looking for a crispy and satisfying snack but want to stay away from processed foods? Here is an easy gluten-free snack that is guaranteed to satisfy your salt and crunch cravings!



Makes six servings (1 serving = ¼ cup)

Base Ingredients:

1 can (19 oz) Chickpeas, no salt added
2 tbsp. Olive oil
1/8 tsp Salt

Chili Mix Seasoning:

½ tsp Chili Powder
½ tsp Cumin
¾ tsp Paprika
¾ tsp Garlic Powder
¼ tsp Onion Powder
¼ tsp Salt

Curry Mix Seasoning:

½ tsp Garlic Powder
¼ tsp Onion Powder
1 tsp Curry Powder
¼ tsp Salt

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 425°F.
2. Drain and rinse chickpeas. Gently pat dry with paper towel.
3. Line baking sheet with parchment paper. Toss together chickpeas, olive oil and salt until evenly combined. Spread out chickpeas evenly on baking sheet.
4. Bake chickpeas for about 40-50 minutes, stirring every 5-10 minutes to ensure even coating of oil. Chickpeas should be a golden brown colour and crispy when finished baking.
5. Remove from the oven and add in Chili Mix seasoning or Curry Mix seasoning.

Nutrition information (Per ¼ cup):

130 calories, Fat 5 g (8% DV), Carbohydrate 15 g (5% DV), Fibre 4 g (%), Protein 5 g, Sodium 170 mg (7% DV), Sugars 1 g, Vitamin A 4%, Vitamin C 0%, Calcium 4%, Iron 6%