Gluten: The Silent Killer

The gluten molecule (the protein part of wheat) can cause destruction and long-term damage to the intestines if you are gluten intolerant, or even gluten sensitive. There are specific tests that your doctor can order that can detect this for sure. However, you do not have to be diagnosed as gluten intolerant/sensitive to know that you experience unpleasant and harsh symptoms when you eat wheat or wheat related products.

The nature of the gluten structure is the culprit—its amino acid sequence can cause inflammation in the intestines. Inflammation, or swelling, in the intestines causes the body to not be able to absorb the essential nutrients and building blocks (such as vitamins, calcium, protein, carbohydrates, fats and other important nutrients) from the very food it is breaking down. Your body can't work well without these nutrients. This problem, regardless of how well you eat, is robbing your body of what it needs to functional properly!

People who are gluten intolerant or sensitive can experience a wide variety of symptoms when they eat wheat products. These can range from, but are not limited to, bloating, constipation, diarrhea, fatigue after eating, cramping, hypoglycemic symptoms, dizziness and nausea.

When you are experiencing FMS & CFS symptoms, your body is already oversensitive. Therefore, during your time of healing, it is **extremely** important that you try to avoid (or at least decrease) eating any wheat or wheat related products. FMS & CFS sufferers need all the nutrients and building blocks they can get in order to heal and feel better!

Other foods that can produce gluten tolerant/sensitive symptoms

Although wheat contains the troublesome gluten molecule, there are other grains that can produce very similar symptoms and gluten-like reactions. These can include rye, barley, oats, buckwheat, quinoa, amaranth and millet.

In addition, many FMS & CFS sufferers can also have similar uncomfortable reactions to other foods, such as milk, corn or soy. Although these foods do not contain the gluten molecule, their structure is similar enough to produce inflammatory symptoms in a lot of people. For this reason, these foods should be avoided as well to increase the healing of the GI tract as well as contribute to lessening the stress put upon this system.

We live in a wheat world!

Once you become aware of the dangers of the gluten molecule and how it is part of wheat, you will begin to notice that most of the products on grocery store shelves have wheat or some type of wheat component in them! In addition, some products may not actually contain gluten, but wheat is used in their processing (i.e. most soy sauces or on conveyer belts as an anti-stick substance). Gluten can also be used as a filler—most medications contain gluten! The reason for wheat's popularity is that it is relatively

inexpensive to grow and process, and has a good shelf life. All those positive qualities still do not outweigh the damages it can produce.

At times it may seem impossible to eat things that do not contain wheat. However, the more you learn about what products have wheat and their alternatives, the easier it will become. Then you will be in the habit of substituting healthier options, eating better and feeling great!

I get it…now I'm going gluten-free!

As you become more educated on gluten and all the bad things that can happen when you eat it, you may be resolved to remove gluten and wheat products completely from your diet. We personally do not advise this…well, at least not at first.

Let's remember that your bodies are very sensitive as a result of the FMS & CFS. Therefore, any shock to the system, including a positive one, can have very negative effects initially. Your body is already on overload—it does not need any more drastic changes.

Our recommendation is to begin to notice how much wheat products you do consume and what happens to you as a result. You can do the same 'food diary' for other suspicious foods like milk, corn and soy. As you learn more about how wheat and/or the other potentially troublesome foods, affect your body and how you feel, then you can slowly start to remove wheat from your diet.

Good luck, and healthy eating!

References:
Gluten-Free Diet: A Comprehensive Resource Guide, Shelley Case, B.Sc.H.Ec.
Prescription for Nutritional Healing, Balch & Balch, 1990.
Celiac.com, Celiac Disease & Gluten-Free Diet Support Page.

Healthy Choices*:

Types of Food	Gluten containing foods	Healthier Alternatives**
Grains, grain-like foods, nuts & seeds	Wheat, barley, bulgur wheat, cereals (most), hard wheat, kamut (pasta wheat), malt, soba noodles, spelt, sprouted wheat/barley, tabbouleh, triticale, wheat nuts, wheat germ, bran, couscous, pearl barley, rye, seitan, udon, farina	Buck wheat, corn, grits (corn), kasha (roasted buckwheat), oats, quinoa, rice, soba (if 100% buckwheat), sorghum, acorn quercus, alfalfa, almonds, sesame & sunflower seeds, soy, flax, tapioca, wild rice, amaranth, millet
Flours and baking components	Artificial color & flavoring, baking powder, barley malt, bleached flour, bread flour, brewer's yeast, brown flour, calcium caseinate, caramel color, citric acid, dextrins, food starch, ground spices, malt extract/syrup/flavoring, modified food starch, mono & diglycerides, MSG, mustard powder, natural flavoring, rice malt, semolina flour, semolina triticum, starch, vegetable starch, triticum durum, wheat durum, wheat starch, whole-meal flour	Amaranth flour, almond flour, apple cider vinegar, Arabic gum, arrowroot, baking soda, bicarbonate of soda, carob bean gum, carob flour, cellulose gum, corn flour, corn syrup, cream of tartar, gelatin, gram flour (from chick peas), guar gum, locust bean gum, maltodextrin, oat flour, polenta, potato flour, psyllium, quinoa flour, rice flour, rice vinegar, sago flour, seaweed, sorghum flour, tapioca flour, turmeric, whey, yam flour, xanthan gum
Protein sources and beans	Hydrolyzed plant protein (HHP), hydrolyzed vegetable protein (HVP), textured vegetable protein (TVP)	Eggs, tofu, fish (fresh), lentils, adzuki beans, mung beans, soybeans, carob bean, cheeses (except blue & Chilton), chickpeas, maize, peas, potatoes, succotash (corn and beans), tofu-soya curd, yogurt, milk
Miscellaneous foods & beverages	Beer, gravy cubes, miso, hard alcohol (distilled from wheat), soy sauce, stock cubes, teriyaki sauce	Wines, champagne, balsamic vinegar, oils, distilled vinegar, tea

*This is not a complete list (but it is a good resource).

**As mentioned before, if you are also intolerant and/or sensitive to milk, corn, soy products or wheat similar products (like rye, barley, oats, buckwheat, quinoa, amaranth and millet), start to lessen them in your diet as well. These other sensitivities may lessen as your intestines begin to heal. It is best to keep a food diary of what you eat and how you react to foods so that you know what your body will and will not tolerate.

Note: Consideration should also be given to decreasing your intake of caffeine, alcohol, sugar and/or hydrogenated oils. These additional products can produce unnecessary and potentially harmful stress on the body.

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