



The Lowdown

**Finding out about this
protein can mean a
health revolution**
BY LAUREN FREIMAN

The gluten-free trend is totally in vogue. There are gluten-free cookies and crackers stocked high on supermarket shelves, menus with plentiful gluten-free options, websites and books on going gluten-free. Is this just another health craze or is it reflecting a truth?

Many don't even know what gluten is, let alone why it might be causing havoc in diets. A protein found in wheat, rye, barley, spelt and kamut, gluten is in bread, cereal, pasta, pizza, cookies, most sauces, soup mixes and almost all processed foods. It has become part of the American diet.

We have been led to think that wheat and other whole grains are

sion and autism.

When a person with gluten intolerance ingests food containing gluten, the body produces antibodies to attack the protein. It's a similar mechanism as in allergies, but instead of triggering histamine, these antibodies cause chronic inflammation.

But before you empty your pantry, here are a few ways to find out if you're one of the thirty percent with an intolerance.

1. Food Elimination Testing—Do your research and eliminate one hundred percent gluten from your diet for two to four weeks. Monitor how your body reacts. Then slowly reintroduce gluten. If you have symptoms or feel worse at all,

good for us, but for approximately one in three Americans, eating grains with gluten makes them sick.

Masked in the form of other diseases and chronic health problems, gluten intolerance can be hard to find. Fatigue, constipation, indigestion, headaches, mood swings, eczema, psoriasis, skin rashes, unresolved symptoms of hypothyroidism—these are a few of the nearly two hundred known health problems associated with eating gluten, according to celiac.org.

A review paper in *The New England Journal of Medicine* listed fifty-five "diseases" that can be caused by eating gluten. These include osteoporosis, irritable bowel disease, cancer, rheumatoid arthritis and almost every other autoimmune disease. Gluten has also been linked to migraines, neuropathy, epilepsy, dementia, anxiety, depres-

you will know the negative impact gluten has on your body.

2. Get Tested—Since gluten intolerance is still rather new to the medical community, most physicians will only test for celiac disease, an autoimmune disease triggered by gluten. The vast majority of people do not have celiac disease, though are still gluten intolerant. A physician or acupuncturist who specializes in functional medicine will be able to order the appropriate test for you.

Finding out you're gluten intolerant can be a revelation for your health. If you do discover an intolerance, you can still have your piece of cake! Gluten-free recipes are making the rounds and you can start at glutenfreegoddess.blogspot.com and www.glutenfree-girl.com for delicious meals and goodies. ■



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on Gluten-Free Goods