

Going

CAUTION



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Against the GRAIN



Do you have problems with your digestion?

Could grains be a factor?

Evidence suggests omitting certain grains from your diet may improve health and vitality.

Naturopath Caroline Robertson explores this grain-free fad.

What's wrong with grains?

Day after day, millions watched Reggie Bird, winner of *Big Brother* season three, complain that bread caused her bloating and cramps while she continued to eat it. When we're addicted to the taste of grains, we refuse to face the fact that it's harming us. This addiction takes a serious toll on our health. In 1963, Dr Robert Kemp coined the term 'carbohydrate addiction' being "the failure to stop using a substance that is deleterious to health". Could you be a carb addict, as Oprah Winfrey confessed? Being a grain-a-holic myself, I clung to many myths about grains and continued to suffer many adverse effects. Finally, after begrudgingly getting off the grain train, I experienced lasting relief from a plethora of problems, as have dozens of my patients. If you suffer from arthritis, allergies, fatigue, digestive disturbances, high cholesterol, hypoglycaemia, cardiovascular disease, bone and teeth loss, mood swings, thyroid issues and even cancer, grains can be a causative factor.

Good grains?

But grains are good aren't they, being the foundation of the food chain?

The truth is that grains are convenient but far from conducive to health. Grains were introduced to our diet around 10,000 years ago when we became an agrarian society. They were cheap, convenient and calorie rich. However, Paleo diet devotees believe grains are difficult to digest by design. Nature made grain seeds with indigestible ingredients so they could survive the digestive tract, plop into soil and thrive. Hence, many find their grain meal feeds their toilet more than their tissues.

Grains are essential for survival in poor countries, with some Asian, Central American and African areas relying on cereals for 80 per cent of their calorie intake. Grains are a cheap source of fibre and calories but the health cost is being questioned by many prominent nutritionists. With greater awareness, grain-free diets are gaining popularity, including the Paleo, GAPS (gut and psychology syndrome) and SCD (specific carbohydrate diet) diets. So why are more people becoming cereal killers? Is there a grain of truth to the claim that our daily bread is our daily poison?

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Grain pain

Why is it some people can indulge in bread, pasta and cakes with no ill effect whereas a paper-thin wafer can cause others cramps and diarrhea? As Hippocrates said, “one man's food is another man's poison”. It all depends on our digestion. To determine the food triggers for you, tune into your food reactions and never assume that you can digest what others can. Gluten sensitivity is reaching epidemic proportions. Dr Kenneth Fine, a gastroenterologist who founded and directs the gluten sensitivity testing service Enterolab, believes gluten sensitivity affects half the population whereas gluten intolerance or coeliac disease is conservatively estimated at one per cent of the population. A simple blood test can determine whether you are gluten sensitive; however, these are not 100 per cent accurate. Removing gluten from your diet for two weeks then slowly reintroducing it and observing your reaction is an ideal way to determine gluten tolerance. Coeliac disease has hundreds of recognised symptoms according to the Coeliac Sprue Association. Some common symptoms include abdominal pain, allergies, bloating,

TEN FACTS AGAINST GRAINS

1 Gas, cramps, constipation, diarrhea and candida can arise from undigested fermenting grains bubbling in the bowel. This is due to antinutrients like lectins, allergens such as gluten and the corn protein called zein.

2 High calories and low nutrition in gqs compared to fruit, vegetables, meat and nuts can cause 'overconsumption and under-nutrition' syndrome. Filling up on grains reduces our intake of more valuable nutrient-dense foods.

3 Phytates in grains inhibit fatty acid and mineral absorption, especially iron and zinc. Phytates demineralise teeth and bones adversely. Phytic acid can be reduced by soaking, cooking or fermenting grains.

4 Gluten and lectins are large antinutrients that can cause gut inflammation, allergies and malabsorption. In those with coeliacs, crohns, ulcerative colitis, diverticulitis and IBS, this creates serious symptoms such as pain, diarrhea, bleeding and nausea. A gluten allergy is also linked to heart problems, as the inflammatory response causes cholesterol levels to rise and calcium deposits to harden arteries and raise blood pressure.

The gliadin protein gluten is highest in wheat, oats, barley and rye but there are also large protein molecules in corn and rice that can aggravate gut inflammation. Legumes also contain lectins.

5 Acidic grains increase inflammation, degeneration, pain and tooth decay. As alkaline blood is essential for optimal energy and health, grains work against this.

6 Digestive flora is disturbed by the antinutrients of lectin and gluten and the chemicals in nonorganic grains. This causes leaky gut syndrome, where large undigested molecules enter the blood stream eliciting an autoimmune allergic reaction that attacks the body. Conditions connected with this include eczema, Hashimoto's

thyroiditis, rheumatoid arthritis, ulcerative colitis, lupus, psoriasis, multiple sclerosis and hormonal imbalances. The diarrhea associated with gluten intolerance causes a depletion of healthy gut flora and an overproliferation of harmful bacteria, bugs and fungus such as candida yeast. This is further provoked by the sugar and yeast often mixed with flours.

7 Insulin spikes from high carbohydrate intake fuel the rollercoaster of high and low blood sugar. The rebound hypoglycaemia triggers tiredness, dizziness, cravings and eventually diabetes.

8 Fat is stored when grains' complex carbohydrates convert to simple sugar and the energy isn't expended. Hence, eating grains and being sedentary encourages obesity and cellulite.

9 Arginine amino acid is extremely high in all grains and lysine is low. This triggers herpes outbreaks. High arginine also causes indigestion, nausea, headache, bloating, diarrhea, gout, blood abnormalities, allergies, asthma aggravation and eczema.

10 Psychological effects of grain intolerance may include anxiety, depression, dyslexia, fatigue, mood swings, ADHD and even autism according to Dr Natasha Campbell-McBride, creator of the GAPS diet.



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Grain-free way

For many people, eliminating such an intrinsic item as grains in their diet is inconceivable. It takes time and dedication to learn tasty grain-free alternatives. If you choose to have grains in moderation, reduce their impact by soaking and cooking them with carminative herbs and spices such as turmeric, cumin and ginger. Buy organic, whole grains without yeast or sugar. Enjoy eating them when your digestion is strongest – at lunchtime. Take protease digestive enzymes that are hydrochloric acid-resistant. Try naturally fermented dishes such as sourdough bread, idli

and dosha pancakes which predigest gluten into amino acids. Be aware that many gluten-free products are packed with potentially unhealthy ingredients such as sugar, corn flour, potato starch, salt and unstable fats.

Grain substitutes

Grains are fast and filling so when we eliminate them we must fill the gap with generous, delicious dishes. I never thought I'd be relishing carrot fettuccine, zucchini noodles, mushroom burgers, omelette pizzas, buckwheat bread, coconut pancakes, grated cauliflower rice and banana muffins – all grain-free. When you use yummy grain substitutes, you won't suffer starvation, cravings or the horrible side effects of grain pains. Try pure buckwheat or bean vermicelli pasta, quinoa, almond meal for breadcrumbs, amaranth for bread, coconut flour for baking. Perfect your favourite foods with grain-free ingredients and you'll feed your senses, not your symptoms.

Always consult a healthcare professional if you have any specific health and dietary problems. NH

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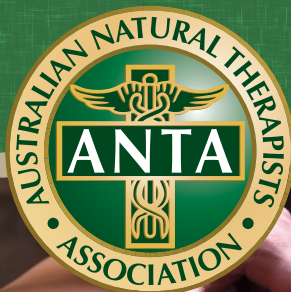
For delicious grain-free recipes see:

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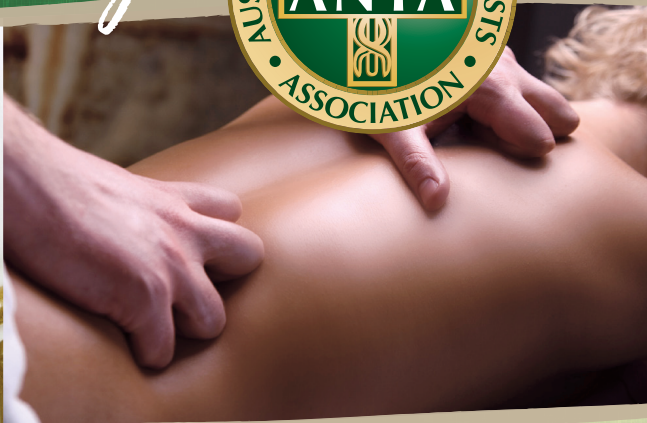
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