

ARE YOU LOSING YOUR MIND? THE GLUTEN CONNECTION.

Weighing in Against Modern Wheat

Cardiologist William Davis wrote *Wheat Belly: Lose the Wheat, Lose the Belly* to report his findings when pre-diabetic or diabetic clients came to him for heart disease prevention and followed his advice. He told them that wheat products, such as two slices of whole wheat bread, raise blood sugar levels higher than nearly all other known foods. “Healthy” whole wheat bread actually has a higher glycemic index than table sugar: 72 versus 59. The glycemic index measures how much something elevates your insulin levels. The higher the insulin levels, the more your body stores fat, both internally around your organs and externally, visibly, in weight gain and obesity. Elevated insulin levels also increase the likelihood of developing diabetes or insulin resistance, with all their complications, and other related illnesses, as well.

As if that weren’t enough damage, in a short YouTube presentation Dr. Davis explains that wheat can be addictive, having a protein unique to wheat gluten called gliadin, which is converted to a morphine-like compound that has the capacity to cross into the brain and bind to morphine receptors. That causes a desire for more wheat and/or simply more food. In short, the gliadin component is an appetite stimulant; people will eat more because their bodies tell them they need more. In his book, Dr. Davis explains that modern wheat has been developed to have more gluten/gliadin than that of decades and centuries past, so the problem is a more recent one, and a serious one. The only way to “stop feeding the monster” is to stop eating the wheat.

His advice to his clients: forego all wheat products. And when they did, what happened exceeded his expectations. The website for his book reads, “People with enormous potbellies saw them disappear when they followed Dr. Davis’s plan for giving up this food.... Discover the startling research that shows why ‘healthy’ whole wheat is in fact the hidden trigger behind that stubborn fat on your hips, thighs, face, and belly.... Research also shows that avoiding wheat can help completely turn around your health ... ease a chronic condition ... or even help you dodge a deadly disease – including diabetes, arthritis, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, stroke, heart attack, digestive problems, brain fog, and more.”¹

Gluten Grains, Brain Fog, and Alzheimer’s

Dr. Davis mentions some people’s “brain fog” clearing when they go off wheat, but there’s more to the story about wheat and the other gluten grains and the neurological symptoms they can cause. First, a bit of background. Celiac disease—also known as gluten intolerance-- is an increasingly common autoimmune disorder wherein the villi that line the small intestine are damaged. Villi are the means by which the body assimilates nutrients from digested food. When people with celiac

disease eat foods that contain gluten, their immune system reacts, and their villi are compromised or damaged in that reaction. Because the villi cannot perform their function as God designed, a person becomes malnourished, no matter how much food he or she eats, or the quality of that food.²

A variety of immediate or delayed symptoms are associated with celiac disease, ranging from bloating and gas to cramping and diarrhea, or even intense pain. Others experience fatigue, anemia, skin rashes, or severe headaches. Osteoporosis is also associated with gluten intolerance, either because of diminished ability of the gut to absorb minerals and Vitamin D, or because in one-fifth of celiac sufferers, the “immune system actually attacks bone tissue, leading to rapid bone destruction and severe osteoporosis,” even after they avoid gluten.³ Because symptoms of gluten intolerance are so varied and unspecific, a diagnosis is often difficult. But what needs to be known is that *sometimes the symptoms are the same as those for dementia*.⁴ Most physicians are unaware that cognitive decline can be a symptom of celiac disease, and as a result, they may diagnose aging or Alzheimer’s disease instead of celiac disease as the true cause.

“New research from the Mayo Clinic suggests that celiac disease should be considered when people start having trouble thinking, doing simple math or remembering things (*Archives of Neurology*, Oct. 2006). A review of patient records revealed several people who had been diagnosed with both celiac disease and dementia. In two cases, following a gluten-free diet reversed the cognitive decline. Quite simply, “earlier diagnosis and treatment of celiac disease with a completely gluten-free diet might be able to keep some people from developing cognitive problems that resemble Alzheimer’s disease.”⁵

More on the Gluten Sensitivity-Brain Failure Link

“New research on celiac disease indicates that it can have a profound effect on the nervous system. In fact, a physician in Great Britain, Dr. Maios Hadjivassiliou, who is a recognized world authority on gluten sensitivity, reported in the journal, *The Lancet*, that gluten sensitivity can actually be at times exclusively a neurological disease. That means that people can be showing symptoms of gluten sensitivity by having issues with brain function without any gastrointestinal problems whatsoever.

“Researchers in Israel have described neurological problems in 51 percent of children with gluten sensitivity. They also have described a link between gluten sensitivity and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Actually, the link between gluten sensitivity and problems with brain function, including learning disabilities, and even memory problems, is not that difficult to understand. Gluten sensitivity is caused by elevated levels of antibodies against a component of gluten called gliadin. This antibody (the antigliadin antibody) combines with gliadin when a person is exposed to any gluten-containing food like wheat, barley or rye.

“When this happens, protein-specific genes are turned on in a special type of immune cell in the body. When these genes are turned on, inflammatory chemicals called

cytokines are created. Cytokines, which are the chemical mediators of inflammation, are directly detrimental to brain function. In fact, elevated levels of cytokines are seen in such devastating conditions as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, and even autism. Essentially, the brain does not like inflammation and responds quite negatively to the presence of cytokines.

“In a recent issue of *Archives of Neurology*,⁶ Mayo Clinic researchers reported a strong relationship between celiac disease and declining brain function. The authors described coincidental problems of both gastrointestinal as well as brain function in a surprisingly high number of individuals. Interestingly, in describing their patients they report that cognitive impairment associated with celiac disease was never the initial clinical diagnosis. They further ask clinicians for a reevaluation of the role of celiac disease in causing cognitive impairment [as it] has the potential of expanding the narrow spectrum of treatable dementia.”⁷ A simple blood test can reveal gluten sensitivity; often, though, simply not eating gluten grains for several days will reveal whether or not symptoms abate and health improves.

Improvement When Gluten Avoided

Another comprehensive and long term study also found that gluten intolerance is linked with senile mental deterioration, dementia and Alzheimer's disease. In this study many of the subjects with “senile memory loss” were found to be gluten sensitive. Eliminating gluten from the diet over a period of three months resulted in over 70% showing marked signs of improvement of memory. It appears that more and more people are becoming gluten sensitive or intolerant, and many report that their minds are clearer when they are on a gluten-free diet.⁸

Yeast May Make the Problem Worse

For some, the digestive difficulties encountered with gluten—and the consequent adverse body/mind connection-- may be compounded by the yeast that so often accompanies the use of gluten grains in breads, pizzas, etc. One gluten intolerant person has learned she is also “yeast intolerant.” Simply getting a whiff of fermenting yeast caused her to experience such dizziness that she considered calling emergency services before she collapsed and was unable to call. The difficulty with yeast is not new news. Over 150 years ago, health reformer Ellen White wrote, “Bread should be light and sweet. Not the least taint of sourness should be tolerated. The loaves should be small, and so thoroughly baked that, as far as possible, the yeast germs shall be destroyed. When hot, or new, raised bread of any kind is difficult of digestion. It should never appear on the table. This rule does not, however, apply to unleavened bread. Fresh rolls..., without yeast or leaven, and baked in a well-heated oven, are both wholesome and palatable...”⁹ “Bread which is two or three days old is more healthful than new bread.”¹⁰

One Woman's Story

After listening to a radio program on celiac disease¹¹, one woman reported, “After a week of rice and vegetables, I couldn’t believe how much better I felt. The bloating, gas, diarrhea, and puffiness were gone. Best of all, though, the depression, lethargy and inability to concentrate and think began to lift. Not long before, I had insisted my doctor test me for Alzheimer’s! I was losing my ability to recognize faces. I couldn’t have written a letter because I wouldn’t have been able to sustain a train of thought long enough to get past the first paragraph.”

Encouragement

Just recently the United Nations’ World Health Organization warned that dementia will double within 18 years, and more than triple by 2050. We don’t know how many in that increase will actually be reacting to gliadin and get misdiagnosed, because we know gluten intolerance is also increasing. Even if simply a clearer mind is desired, one might try a gluten-free diet for a week to see if there’s any improvement in mental clarity—or longer, if mental decline is being experienced.

A gluten-free diet is neither impossible nor unappealing. Gluten-containing grains are wheat, barley and rye—and also oats if they are contaminated by processing in a facility that processes gluten grains. Corn contains a different type of gluten, to which some gluten-intolerant people react. There are organic, gluten-free (even corn-free) flours and bread mixes on the market, or one can simply replace gluten grains in many recipes with a variety of delicious, nutritionally-loaded alternatives like millet, quinoa, buckwheat, amaranth, teff, and all different kinds and colors of rice. It is best to buy organic grains only. Most corn is genetically modified, and most commercial grains are sprayed with cancer-linked glyphosates not long before harvest. A portion of the chemicals reach and remain on the grains, which are then sold to consumers.

Soaked chia or camelina seeds, or ground flax seeds, can replace gluten to hold some non-gluten flour mixes together. A 50-50 mix of garbanzo flour and water, sitting at room temperature until it “bubbles” or ferments, then refrigerated, acts as a mild leavening agent. So does 35% hydrogen peroxide. Recipes abound on the internet. A quick-and-easy gluten-free, yeast-free bread/cracker recipe follows, for a short- or long-term bread substitute.

SWEET OR SAVORY SAFE CRACKERS

Basic Recipe:

1 cup gluten-free grain flour (rice, millet, quinoa, amaranth, teff, organic corn)
1¼ c of another gluten-free grain flour (or 1 c flour and ¼ c sesame, sunflower or pumpkin seeds, whole or partially chopped)
1 t salt
3 T chia seeds, camelina seeds, or ground flax seed, soaked in 1 c water 5 minutes
Enough water to make somewhat stiff batter

Optional additions: Be creative!

¼ c carob powder to replace ¼ c of other flour

¼ c bean flour to replace ¼ c of other flour

Any desired seasoning or spice, such as cumin, vanilla, coriander, lemon, organic orange peel, celery seed, dill, etc., etc.

For sweet, try chopped or ground nuts, roasted sesame or pumpkin seeds, dried fruit, jam, coconut flakes or shreds, carob, chopped apples....

Use applesauce, nut milk, fruit juice in place of some of all of liquid

For savory, try chopped onions, garlic, olives, spinach....

Mix all together, add enough liquid to make somewhat stiff batter. Put by large spoonfuls on oiled baking sheet or parchment paper. Flatten mounds to get more of a cracker texture, if desired. The thicker the mound, the longer it takes to bake, and the softer the result. Chewing our food more will release sufficient enzymes necessary for optimum digestion, so most prefer a “crunchier” bread, achieved by flattening the mounds.

Tip: sprinkle sesame seeds on first; mix less likely to stick. Bake 350 degrees 30-45 minutes, depending on moistness of your batter and thickness of your spoonfuls.

Alternative: Try heating pizza stone to 400 degrees, put spoonfuls on the stone, bake at 350 degrees on that instead. Sprinkle sesame seeds on first, to prevent sticking to the stone. Another tip: Often the bread/crackers are better the second day, after flavors permeate. Just reheat if desired. Serve with nut or seed butters, jams, or eat plain. These don't last long! A final tip: My favorite combination is 1 c organic corn flour, 1 cup millet flour, ½ cup roasted sesame seeds—not ground, along with the chia and salt and water.

¹ <http://www.losethewheatlosetheweight.com/losethewheatlosetheweight/ps/index?keycode=205017;>

² <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0001280/>

³ Univ. of Edinburgh, Scotland, published in *New England Journal of Medicine*. This reference found in *Bottom Line: Personal*, Vol. 33, No. 10, May 15, 2012, p. 16.

⁴ Celiac Disease May Masquerade as Alzheimer's, editorial, <http://www.peoplespharmacy.com/2006/10/30/celiac-disease-1/>, Oct. 30, 2006.

⁵ Dr. William Davis, cardiologist and author of the best-seller book *Wheat Belly: Lose the Wheat, Lose the Belly, and Find Your Path Back to Health* has concluded that wheat isn't a healthy grain for most people. “A high-wheat diet has been linked to obesity, digestive diseases, arthritis, diabetes, dementia, and heart disease.... [also lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, insulin resistance, osteoporosis]. Decades of selective breeding and hybridization by the food industry to increase yield and confer certain baking and aesthetic characteristics on flour have created new proteins in wheat that the human body isn't designed to handle. The gluten protein in modern wheat is different in structure from the gluten in older forms of wheat. In fact, the structure of modern gluten is something that humans have never before experienced” when eating wheat.

⁶ <http://archneur.ama-assn.org>

⁷ www.vanguardneurologist.com/new-study-links-gluten-sensitivity-to-brain-failure/

⁸ http://www.beingwhole.co.za/docs/JUICES_CUT_ALZHEIMERS.pdf

⁹ Ellen White, *Ministry of Healing*, 301.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, 317.

¹¹ A CD of that one-hour radio interview about celiac disease that covers symptoms, diagnosis and treatment is available for \$16 from the People's Pharmacy (CD- 594), P. O. Box 52027, Durham, NC 27717-2027 or from www.peoplespharmacy.com.