

EATING GLUTEN-FREE WITH SCLERODERMA

By: Rebecca Dube



So many people are eating “gluten-free” these days. But what does that mean, and how does that affect people living with scleroderma? In the Scleroderma Foundation brochure “Eating Well with Scleroderma,” eating certain foods to reduce inflammation is discussed, and the positive impact that these foods can have on a disease condition. For some, eating the right foods also means avoiding the wrong ones – foods that trigger distress and inflammation. For many, these are foods containing gluten.

Avoiding gluten is most often tied to those living with celiac disease, an autoimmune disease in which the ingestion of gluten leads to damage in the small intestine. Four percent of people who have celiac disease also have scleroderma. Many others may not have celiac disease, but do have gluten sensitivity, which produces many of the same uncomfortable symptoms.

According to the Celiac Disease Foundation, “people who are gluten sensitive experience symptoms in response to eating gluten, but will not have intestinal damage and will test negative for celiac disease antibodies.” These symptoms can include: bloating, diarrhea, abdominal pain, “foggy mind”, bone or joint pain, constipation, headaches and chronic fatigue.

People with gluten sensitivity often find that many of these symptoms are relieved when they adopt a

gluten-free diet. Some individuals living with scleroderma noted on the online forum *Inspire.com* that they experienced relief in joint pain and inflammation in changing their diet. Others also eliminated sugars, corn, dairy and eggs from their diet with positive results. As always, contact your physician first to discuss your symptoms and talk to a registered dietitian about changing your diet.

As awareness of gluten sensitivity has increased, it has become easier than ever to obtain gluten-free foods. What is gluten-free? Gluten is a protein composite found in wheat and related grains, including rye and barley. Oats do not contain gluten, but can be contaminated if processed with other gluten products.

Medicines and even shampoo can contain gluten, as it acts as a glue to hold foods (and other compounds) together. Always read labels, and note that “wheat-free” does not always mean gluten-free. To make sure a product is gluten-free, look at the ingredient list. When in a restaurant, ask how something is prepared. French fries may be cooked in the same oil as breaded chicken fingers, thus spreading gluten to the fries.

Common foods that contain gluten are listed in the break-out box to the right, along with anything else that uses “wheat flour” as an ingredient. Many gluten-free foods are made using non-wheat flours, such as rice flour, nut flours, sweet potato flour, and others. Go to www.celiac.org to learn more about a gluten-free diet, and always consult your doctor. Eating gluten free is a strict discipline to follow, but in the end, it may be a path to symptom relief.



SOURCES OF GLUTEN

- Wheat
 - * Wheatberries
 - * Durum
 - * Emmer
 - * Semolina
 - * Spelt
 - * Farina
 - * Farro
 - * Graham
 - * Khorasan wheat
 - * Einkorn wheat
- Rye
- Barley
- Triticale
- Malt
- Brewer’s Yeast
- Wheat Starch

FOODS THAT CONTAIN GLUTEN

- Pasta
- Noodles
- Breads and Pastries
- Crackers
- Baked Goods
- Cereal and Granola
- Breakfast Foods
- Breading
- Coating Mixes
- Croutons
- Sauces and Gravies
- Flour Tortillas
- Beer
- Brewer’s Yeast

Sources for this article include The Celiac Disease Foundation at www.celiac.org, the Scleroderma Foundation Page on www.Inspire.com, the Scleroderma Association of Manitoba (www.sclerodermamanitoba.com/gluten-free-eating-with-scleroderma) and SFNE support group members.

