

This Simple Diet Change Can Do Wonders for Your Health

It's truly amazing how many health problems are caused by gluten, specifically wheat. Much of the time, the person suffering has no idea the problem is gluten. They take allergy pills, arthritis medicine, antacids and more to treat the symptoms, then suffer from the side effects of the medication ... when all the while all they had to do was give up gluten.

As one who has been living gluten-free since October of 2012, I can tell you it's one of the best decisions I ever made. I do not miss it at all! I REALLY do not miss the way it made me feel tired and the way it made me crave more gluten. Yuck. Poison.

The reason I gave up gluten was not for any problems I was experiencing, such as gastrointestinal discomfort or allergies, which are common reasons other people give up gluten. No, I gave it up because I learned how unnecessary it was and also how starchy wheat has become.

As a result of avoiding gluten I lost weight and I sleep better and have more energy, which is consistent throughout the day, no more roller-coaster of sleepiness and coffee jolts.

Sadly, the wheat that is grown in the United States today is not the wheat of our forefathers. It has been hybridized to produce a higher yield. But the grain itself is has a higher starch content and more disruptive to our digestive system. Unfortunately, this goes for whole grain as well as the refined wheat products.

I was pleased to interview one of America's leading gluten-free physicians, Dr. Patrick Fratellone, whose New York City medical practice is thriving because of his cutting-edge views

on health and nutrition. Too bad there aren't more doctors like him.

"When I went to medical school I did not have a course on nutrition," he said.

Fratellone has the distinction of being one of the few integrative cardiologists in the United States. The Manhattan physician learned about nutrition on his own, after completing medical school.

As a result, he said he thinks many of his colleagues prescribe drugs and even perform surgery when only a change in diet might be needed. "Physicians in general do not know about nutrition," he said.

Fratellone believes the root of most diseases lies in the small intestine, also known as the gut. That's why he advises his patients to avoid gluten, which means no wheat of any kind, not even whole wheat, and no rye, barley, or oats.

Fratellone said an easy way to remember the gluten grains is to think of your eyebrow: (Barley, Rye, Oats, Wheat).

"Gluten is bad because it's a protein that causes an insult to the gut," he said. "So if you insult the gut there are three things that can happen: you can't absorb food and its nutrition properly, you won't absorb your vitamins, you cannot make vitamin D. Vitamin D3 is made in the small intestines and 90 percent of the happy hormone serotonin is made in the small intestine. So if gluten is causing an insult to the gut you can see the cascade of effects it has to the whole body."

Many people who suffer from gluten sensitivity are unaware they even have it and so are their doctors.

"The symptoms of gluten intolerance vary from gastrointestinal, which could be bloating, gas, diarrhea, constipation, to unbelievable other symptoms like tremors,

dermatitis: itching, it could be nerve disorders. So it varies from patient to patient," Fratellone said.

People who experience the most extreme reaction to eating gluten have what's known as celiac disease.

"Celiac is an allergy, not a sensitivity," he said. "The difference is a person who has celiac that has gluten can get severely ill, meaning more than the symptoms we talked about. They could have bloody diarrhea, they could have a seizure, they could lose eyesight. So being celiac and having gluten is very dangerous."

Fratellone said for some people, avoiding gluten is only part of the solution. Since gluten can damage the gut, some may need to repair it the natural way with herbal teas like chamomile, peppermint, or slippery elm.

Way out on the other coast, in sunny southern California, I spoke with one of America's fittest 60-year-olds, who credits his buff body and excellent health largely to his gluten-free lifestyle.

At an age when most Americans slow down, 60-year-old Mark Sisson said he feels the healthiest he's ever been. That's saying a lot because he used to be an all-star athlete.

"I wound-up being one of the best runners in the country," Sisson said. "I was a marathoner and then I turned into a long-distance triathlete."

But Mark hid a secret.

"As fit as I appeared to be, in terms of my racing skills and ability to go fast, I really endured a lot of issues with health problems," he said.

They ranged from sinus pain to respiratory infections to heartburn and more.

“When I got into my 40s I developed arthritis in my fingers to the extent that I would cringe if a strong guy would put his hand out to shake mine,” Sisson said.

The worst was his irritable bowel syndrome that plagued him since childhood.

“I lived my life sort of wondering what gas stations are open with a bathroom, you know, on the way to the airport, for instance. Or if I have something I have to do in two hours, how can I be ready for that without having, you know, an episode,” he said.

Searching for relief, he tried all kinds of doctors and drugs, but nothing helped.

“One day, a bunch of years ago, my wife said, ‘I’ve given up grains, why don’t you try giving up grains for 30 days and see what happens,’” he said.

He took his wife’s advice, and all of his problems virtually disappeared.

“The irritable bowel syndrome that had run my life, for most of my life, went away. The heartburn went away. The arthritis went away,” he said.

Although Sisson was thrilled to finally feel better, he was also frustrated that that cure—giving up gluten, was so simple. Yet, all those years conventional medicine never had a clue.

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