



# IS GLUTEN-FREE GOOD FOR YOU?



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Gluten is a protein found in wheat, rye and barley. It's what helps make dough rise and baked goods crispy and light. For some people, gluten can cause a number of serious and debilitating symptoms, such as abdominal pain and bloating, headaches, joint pain, hives and difficulty concentrating.

If you or a loved one has celiac disease (an autoimmune disorder that causes damage to the intestines), are sensitive to gluten, or have a wheat allergy, you can certainly benefit from a gluten-free diet. However, if it's not medically-necessary, going gluten-free has no real health benefits, and can actually do more harm than good.

### Going Gluten-Free: What You Should Know

Going gluten-free means eliminating all foods from your diet that contain gluten, or have come into contact with gluten in the manufacturing process. Today, a gluten-free diet is a lot easier to manage. With the wide range of gluten-free products and meals at the supermarket and restaurants, you might not even notice gluten missing from the menu.

But there's a catch. Many of the foods that contain gluten also have important vitamins, minerals and fiber your body needs for good health. When you take away these foods you lose more than just gluten — you lose essential nutrients at the same time.

Additionally, many of gluten-free foods on the market are high in calories, saturated fat and cholesterol which can cause unwanted weight gain.

### The Bottom Line?

If you think a gluten-free diet is a healthier way to eat, that may not necessarily be true. If you don't have to say no to gluten for medical reasons, it's best to continue making mealtime and snacks a healthy balance of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean meats and low-fat dairy.

**Resources:** [WebMD.com](http://WebMD.com) and [EatRight.org](http://EatRight.org)

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## Tips for a Healthy Gluten-Free Lifestyle

If you think you may be allergic to gluten and are considering a gluten-free diet, remember to:

- **Talk to your doctor first.** If you think you might be sensitive to gluten, it's important that you have a health professional make the appropriate diagnosis.
- **Choose the right foods.** If you go gluten-free, choose foods that are naturally high in fiber and nutrients that do not contain gluten, such as:
  - unprocessed beans, seeds and nuts
  - fresh eggs, meats, fish and poultry (not battered, breaded or marinated)
  - fresh fruits and vegetables
  - most dairy products
- **Read labels.** Reach for nutrient-dense snacks that are low in fat, and be wary of "fat-free" items because many are actually highly processed and unhealthy for you.
- **Take a multi-vitamin.** Talk to your doctor about taking a multi-vitamin to help make up for lost nutrients.

## TOP 10 WAYS TO KEEP YOUR FAMILY ACTIVE



Physical activity benefits all ages.

Make physical activity fun by encouraging the whole family to join in. It's recommended that adults need 2 ½ hours a week of physical activity and children need 60 minutes a day. Here are some tips to add more activity to your family's busy schedule.

1. **Schedule time for family activity.** Check your schedule throughout the week for free time you can spend together being active.
2. **Plan ahead and track your progress.** Use the family calendar to plan specific activities and encourage your kids to check them off as you go.
3. **Start small.** Introduce one new family activity and then add more when everyone is ready.
4. **Work around the house.** Involve the kids in chores like walking the dog, vacuuming, sweeping, washing the car and doing yard work.
5. **Plan easily-accessible activities.** Make activities simple, such as walking, jogging, jumping rope and dancing. Check your community recreation center for more ideas.

6. **Build new skills.** Enroll the kids (and yourself) in classes they might enjoy such as gymnastics, dance or tennis and encourage them to practice.

7. **Plan activities for all weather conditions.** On nice days, go outside and play. If it's raining, take a walk in the mall, swim in an indoor pool or put on an active video game.

8. **Challenge your family to friendly competition.** Get the whole family involved with an interactive sports video game, a dance competition or energetic charades.

9. **Include other families.** Invite others to join your family activities, such as playing a backyard game of kickball or going bowling.

10. **Create active fun for everyone.** Plan family celebrations around physical activity, such as boogie boarding at the beach or a trip to the zoo.

Finally, make more time for physical activity by limiting television, video gaming and computer use (unrelated to work or school) to two hours or less each day.

When the entire family joins the fun you'll enjoy a happier, healthier home.

References: [ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov) and [nhlbi.nih.gov](http://nhlbi.nih.gov)

# ask THE HEALTH COACH



## Q Are e-cigarettes safe to use?

**A** Using e-cigarettes (short for “electronic cigarettes”) is growing in popularity. Manufacturers say e-cigarettes contain synthetic nicotine without the added chemicals found in tobacco cigarettes, and that they expel harmless water vapor instead of toxic smoke. Touted as a “safe” alternative to tobacco cigarettes, many people believe e-cigarettes can effectively help them quit smoking.

The problem is that the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has yet to approve e-cigarettes as a safe smoking cessation aid, and currently there is no government oversight on manufacturing e-cigarettes. This means it’s impossible to know what chemicals they contain, or if there are short- and long-term health implications.

So what do we know? We do know that the synthetic nicotine used in e-cigarettes has the same addictive properties as the nicotine found in tobacco products, which means you can get the same withdrawal symptoms. Early studies suggest that using e-cigarettes may harm the arteries over time, so it’s important for people with heart conditions to talk to their doctor before using these devices.

If you smoke and are ready to quit, it’s best to talk with your doctor about some of the FDA-approved nicotine replacement products to help you get started. There are also smoking cessation programs available at no cost to you. Contact the Quit for Life program at 1-866-QUIT-4-LIFE (1-866-784-8454) or the Quit Smoking Now program at 1-877-QUIT-IT-NOW (1-877-784-8486) or visit [tobaccofreeflorida.com](http://tobaccofreeflorida.com) for support, guidance and resources to help you quit.

**References:** *WebMD.com and Lung.org (American Lung Association)*

# fresh AND HEALTHY RECIPE OF THE MONTH



## BROILED MANGO

Broiling fruit brings out its inherent sweetness for a yummy dessert without added sugar. A squeeze of tart lime juice balances it out. Experiment with pineapple or other fleshy fruit as well. Makes 2 servings.

### Ingredients

- 1 mango, peeled and sliced (see Tip)\*
- lime wedges

### Directions

1. Position rack in upper third of oven and preheat broiler. Line a broiler pan with foil.
2. Arrange mango slices in a single layer in the prepared pan. Broil

until browned in spots, 8 to 10 minutes. Squeeze lime wedges over the mango and serve.

### Nutrition Information per serving:

69 calories; 0 g fat (0 g sat ); 0 mg cholesterol; 18 g carbohydrates; 0 g added sugar; 1 g protein; 2 g fiber; 2 mg sodium; 167 mg potassium.

**Nutrition Bonus:** Vitamins C (50% daily value) and A (15% daily value).

### Carbohydrate Servings: 1

#### \*Tip: How to Cut a Mango

1. Slice both ends off the mango, revealing the long, slender seed inside.
2. Set the fruit upright on a work surface and remove the skin with a sharp knife.
3. With the seed perpendicular to you, slice the fruit from both sides of the seed, yielding two large pieces.
4. Turn the seed parallel to you and slice the two smaller pieces of fruit from each side.
5. Cut the fruit into the desired shape.

*Recipe courtesy of: EatingWell.com*