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GLUTEN FREE: TO BE OR NOT TO BE?

That is the question many people are asking about their diet. Kalli Castille, director of nutritional support & culinary at Cancer Treatment Centers of America® (CTCA) in Tulsa has the truth about gluten.

Q. How do we know if we should eliminate gluten from our diet?

A: It's important to listen to your body. Only 1% of the general population is actually affected by celiac disease (an autoimmune digestive disease), but about 6% of the population (18 million Americans), suffer from gluten sensitivity. Symptoms include:

- Bloating, gas and/or abdominal pain
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Fatigue
- Itchy skin rash
- Migraines, headaches and "foggy brain"
- Joint pain

You can see your primary care physician and have a blood test done to test for gluten sensitivity/ceeliac disease. From here, a biopsy is usually recommended to confirm a diagnosis of celiac disease. If you have some of these symptoms, you can try a gluten free diet for two-three weeks and assess if your symptoms are improving.

(Source: National Foundation for Celiac Awareness)

Q: Some people think that if a food is gluten-free, it must be healthy. Is that true?

A: Not necessarily. You have to look at the ingredients. Many gluten-free items are highly processed and very high in simple carbohydrates. People often assume that a gluten-free diet will help them lose weight, but you have to consider what you are putting in your body. Many gluten-free products are made with white rice and potato starch. For example, a gluten-free bagel has 72 grams of carbohydrates which is equivalent to the carbohydrates in two full-size candy bars or two 12 ounce cans of soda.

Q: If you do want to lose weight, what should you eat?

A: This is the diet I recommend not only for weight loss, but disease prevention, and this is naturally gluten-free as well. Stick to lean proteins, healthy fats and carbohydrate sources coming from fruits and vegetables. *(see example meals on next page)*



Kalli Castille

Director of Nutritional Support and Culinary



Cleansing Cranberry Cocktail

- 1 cup of unsweetened Cranberry juice
- ½ cup fresh pineapple juice
- 1 cup of aloe juice
- 2 tbsp. of raw honey
- 1 lime, juiced
- 1 cup of fresh cranberries
- 1 small bulb of ginger, peeled and thinly sliced

RECIPE TIP:
Ginger can help with nausea or an upset stomach

Bring cranberry juice, fresh cranberries, and ginger to a light simmer. Pour hot cranberry mixture into pitcher, add in remaining ingredients. Serve over ice, garnish with fresh cranberries and lime zest.



Tips from Chef Michell Janah

“Cranberries are loaded with antioxidants which can help protect the heart, and they have bacteria-fighting properties which protect the stomach.”

“Aloe juice is also high in antioxidants and can help boost immunity, cleanse the digestive system, reduce inflammation and promote healthy skin.”

“Macho Man” Raw Protein Bars

- 2 cups quick cooking oat meal
- 1/2 cup almonds
- 2/3 cup dried cranberries
- 1 tbsp. cinnamon
- 1/2 cup honey
- 1/2 cup of organic almond butter
- 1/2 cup unsweetened almond milk
- 1/2 cup apple sauce
- 1/2 cup dark chocolate chips
- 2 tsp. vanilla

RECIPE TIP:
Using local honey can help with seasonal allergies.

Mix all ingredients together in a large mixing bowl. Press the mixture into a lined and oiled 9x13 inch sheet pan. Refrigerate until firm, before cutting into bars.

Tips from Chef Michelle Janah

“This is a great recipe when you need a grab and go breakfast or snack and you don’t have time to make anything.”

“The oats, almonds and almond butter provide a great source of protein, fiber, and healthy fat.”

“Fiber is important because it helps regulate digestion and it keeps you fuller longer.”

“We are using honey as our sweetener because it has so many healthy properties. The antioxidants in honey can help fight viral colds and cough as well as improve colon health by increasing the healthy bacteria in the gut.”

“The dark chocolate chips are also full of antioxidants and can help regulate blood sugar. I would recommend using 60-70% dark chocolate because it has very little sugar and is minimally processed.”

EXAMPLE OF HEALTHY MEALS FOR THE DAY:

Breakfast: Make a scramble with eggs and your favorite veggies. Top with avocado for a healthy fat source.

Lunch: Have a big salad with fresh veggies, nuts and a piece of grilled salmon. Get the dressing on the side if you are eating out.



Dinner: Try chicken or turkey with a sweet potato, and a green vegetable like asparagus.

Snack: If you are on the go and need something quick, grab an apple and a couple hardboiled eggs, or some nuts. If you need something to curb your sweet tooth, have a piece of dark chocolate. Just make sure it is 70% cacao or higher to ensure you are getting the nutritional benefit of the antioxidants and fiber.



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