What’s the Deal With Fibromyalgia and Gluten?

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Fibromyalgia and Gluten Intolerance

There may be evidence that supports the notion that fibromyalgia and gluten don't mix.

A recent study published by BMC Gastroenterology took seven female participants diagnosed with fibromyalgia and placed them on a gluten-free diet for one full year. The researchers found that the women showed a “remarkable improvement” in all outcome measures by the end of the study. Their fibromyalgia and IBS symptoms were reduced significantly.

Gluten is the protein constituent of grains like wheat, rye and barley. Some individuals can't tolerate gluten in their system. When gluten comes into contact with the small intestine, it produces an autoimmune-like response called celiac disease.

It is a condition that strikes one in about 133 people, most of whom don’t even know they have it. It may have genetic links, so if someone has a close relative with the condition, it can be passed on.

There are many physical symptoms that celiac disease or gluten intolerance can produce. The following symptoms are among the most common:

- Abdominal cramping
- Dehydration
- Bloating
- Abdominal distention
- Muscle cramping
- Energy loss
- Appetite increased; cravings
- Gas or flatulence
- Weakness and lethargy
- Back pain
- Fatigue
- Night blindness
- Constipation
- Decreased ability to clot blood
- Sores or cracks in corners of mouth
- Diarrhea
- Edema
- Electrolyte depletion
- Dry skin

Common emotional states associated with gluten intolerance and celiac diseases are:

- Mood changes
- Depression
- Inability to concentrate
- Irritability
- Disinterest
- Brain fog

In an article in published by *The New England Journal of Medicine*, there are 55 conditions that can be caused by consuming gluten. Among them were osteoporosis, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), anemia, lupus, and many other autoimmune diseases.

Gluten may be responsible for neurological and psychiatric types of illnesses like depression, dementia and neuropathy. If gluten brings out all of these types of conditions, it isn't too hard to imagine that it can exacerbate fibromyalgia.

Celiac disease and gluten intolerance creates inflammation throughout the body. It affects the brain, heart, joints, digestive tract and other organ systems. If gluten is the cause of the different conditions in an individual, the elimination of this protein may be the key to resolving many health issues.

The Gluten-Free Diet

The simplest way to determine if you have gluten sensitivity is to eliminating all gluten. This test should last for between two and four weeks. If you find your symptoms improving, it could indicate that you have celiac disease or gluten intolerance. The foods you should eliminate are:

- **Gluten-containing foods:** rye, oats, wheat, spelt, barley and other sources.
- **Hidden sources of gluten can be in places you would never dream of.** For example, soup mixes and salad dressings can contain gluten. Everyday things like lipstick, envelope stamps and certain vitamins may also contain gluten. Not even a breadcrumb must pass your lips.

After the two- to four-week period, start eating gluten. If you experience symptoms that come back after consuming gluten, you know that it must be eliminated from your diet. There are many products on the market that are gluten-free, albeit they are more expensive.

You will have to make a few sacrifices, but it will be worth the self-denial if your fibromyalgia symptoms improve.