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# Weight Management and the Gluten-Free Diet

*Updated January 2021*

Individuals with undiagnosed or untreated celiac disease may experience unintended weight loss over time due to malabsorption of nutrients caused by damage to the intestine. However, when a gluten-free diet is begun and the intestine heals, lost weight is sometimes re-gained and weight gain continues. One factor which likely contributes to this is the widespread availability of processed gluten-free foods which contain high amounts of fat, sugar and calories. And this phenomenon doesn't just apply to those with celiac disease. Regardless of the reason for being gluten-free, a gluten-free diet which relies too much on these types of foods can lead to weight gain and related health problems down the road, including diabetes, heart disease, some cancers, and arthritis.

## **Some Helpful Tips for Staying at a Healthy Weight While Following a Gluten-Free Diet:**

1. Make it a habit to fill about 1/2 your plate with vegetables. The more colorful the better! This will provide you with gluten-free food that is filling, low in calories, and full of nutrients.
2. Limit your intake of extra sweets and added fats. Instead of gluten-free cookies or cake for dessert, which are usually high in fat and sugar, try desserts focused on fruit, such as yogurt topped with fresh seasonal fruit, or even a thin sliver of cake accompanied by plenty of delicious berries.
3. Select low fat protein sources such as lean meat, poultry without the skin, fish, and other seafood that is not fried or battered. Other healthy protein sources which are usually gluten-free (READ THE LABEL) include beans, lentils, tofu, tempeh, and many meat substitutes.
4. Choose low fat dairy options like low fat or skim milk, low fat cheeses, low fat or fat free yogurt, and sherbet or sorbet instead of full-fat ice cream.
5. Be physically active! Physical activity is an important part of maintaining a healthy body weight. (Physical activity has additional health benefits too.) Try to be active for at least 45 minutes per day, more if you can (but begin any new exercise program gradually).

## **Some ideas to get you moving:**

- Enjoy a walk after dinner or first thing in the morning
- Take the stairs rather than the elevator
- Take a dance or aerobic class
- Take up yoga or pilates
- In store parking lots, park FARTHEST from store entry
- Find a friend or family member to join you and keep you moving!
- Try a new sport
- Join a health club or gym
- Sign up for a fun run or fundraising walk

## **Questions to ask if considering a weight-loss program:**

Does the program provide counseling to help you change your eating behaviors and personal habits?

Is the staff made up of a variety of qualified counselors and health professionals such as registered dietitians, doctors, nurses, psychologists, and exercise physiologists?

Is training available on how to deal with times when you may feel stressed and slip back to old habits?

Are food choices flexible and suitable? Are weight goals set by the client and the health professional?

Is attention paid to keeping the weight off? How long is this phase?

Are you ready and motivated for change?

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GIG is on a mission to make life easier for everyone living gluten-free.

*This article has been assessed and approved by a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist.*