



## Gluten Is Not Necessarily Your Enemy

by Abbey N. Folsom  
Nutritionist

A healthy human diet is composed of approximately 50 percent carbohydrates. This does not mean simple carbohydrates, or simple sugars. Think white bread (simple sugar) versus whole grain bread (complex carb). A diet containing complex carbohydrates is essential for human health.

Wheat has been publicly shamed via health fads over the decades. By around 2000, carbohydrates had widely come to be seen as the root of all evil. People started believing nonfactual information about the diets of our Paleolithic ancestors.

Ah ha! It must be the gluten! That was the presumed scientific explanation to support these diet-fads.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture indicates these diet trends actually reduced per capita wheat consumption.



### GLUTEN PROTEIN

Gluten and gliadin are the two main proteins found in wheat, barley and rye. The USDA lists five classes of wheat: hard red winter, hard red spring, soft red winter, white, durum and rye. Gluten is found in numerous processed foods made from wheat, barley and rye, including breads, batters on fried foods, cereal, pasta, crackers and baked goods.

Gluten-free foods and food products can be found in most groceries and restaurants. Gluten may also be found in premade dressings and sauces, frozen food and numerous snacks. Gluten is like an awkward cousin who just keeps showing up.

### INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASES

Celiac and Crohn's disease are inflammatory bowel diseases, or IBDs, linked to gluten sensitivity. However, ulcerative colitis

is not associated with gluten. Complete intolerance to gluten and gliadin proteins is a characteristic of Celiac disease.

For people diagnosed with Celiac or Crohn’s disease, abstinence from gluten and gliadin proteins is essential. If you suffer chronic diarrhea or unmanaged IBD, the long-term outcome can include malabsorption of essential nutrients or necrotic intestinal tissue. Surgery may prove necessary to remove segments of necrotic intestine. Some sufferers may need to wear a colostomy bag for life. Colon cancer is also a consequence.

Intestinal repair may result from abstinence from proteins gluten and gliadin – thus preventing long-term damage to the gastrointestinal tract.

**TALKING TO YOUR DOCTOR**

It is not necessary or advisable to avoid gluten, unless you have a known allergy. Many people suspect they may be intolerant to gluten. Gastrointestinal distress – bloating, flatulence, diarrhea – all are symptoms that may be attributed to gluten.

If you are experiencing distressed bowels, talk to your doctor about your symptoms. A physician can order a blood test to check for IgG antibodies to gluten or other suspected allergens. Deductive logic will determine whether you suffer a mild allergy or complete intolerance. A medical diagnosis of IBD is important for long-term health and nutrition management. Otherwise, you don’t need to avoid gluten.


**OVERALL NUTRITION**


If you do have gluten intolerance, you can prepare alternatives to wheat-based favorites, such as cauliflower crusts for pizzas. However, starchy substitutes like cauliflower, corn and potatoes are not necessarily healthier, as the body quickly converts starch to sugar.

Going gluten-free is not going to help you lose weight. A diet high in fiber is associated with leaner body mass.

Whole grains are considered high-fiber and full of essential nutrients, and are a natural source of B vitamins and trace minerals. During the refining process for wheat, nutrients are stripped out and then fortified back into the food product. Be aware that gluten-free foods may not be fortified with essential vitamins in a similar manner to fortified wheat. Over time, without attention to micronutrients, gluten-free diets may not be as complete.

This is one of many reasons nutritionists encourage a whole-grain or whole-food diet. Unless your doctor has diagnosed an inflammatory bowel disease, you may not need to avoid gluten.

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**Answers**

**TECHNOLOGY**

# Does Your Brain Need a Workout?

These apps could help keep you sharp

by Mike Taylor  
Florida League of Cities



**W**e always want to keep ourselves in top physical shape through working out and healthy lifestyles. But how about our brains?

During the past couple of years, apps have popped up that claim – citing scientific research – to “Train Your Brain” through playing games on your phone or tablet. The best part is that you can accomplish all this from the comfort of your favorite lounge chair.

Although there are many more of these apps than listed here, these four have earned high ratings in both the iOS App Store and the Google Play store.

**Lumosity** – Perhaps the most famous of all brain-training apps, with commercials on television touting its effectiveness. Lumosity provides games that focus on memory, attention, flexibility, speed and problem solving. After starting with a test of your brain acumen, the app creates a profile. To take full advantage of the app’s personalized daily training workouts, you must purchase the premium version. If you don’t want to go premium, the app limits you to three games per day.

**Elevate** – This app touts itself as improving writing, listening, speaking, reading and math skills. It tracks your performance and customizes a training program just for you. The app begins by asking which skills you would like to improve, and then gives you a short test. To realize the full benefit of the app, you must pay a yearly fee. Elevate requires you to sign up for a free trial, which you must cancel within 14 days or you’ll get charged for a full year.

**Peak** – Peak offers more than 40 games, during which you can earn badges for attaining certain levels. This app has a slight twist. It can compare your score against friends, and other users’ scores. As with the other apps, to obtain access to all the games a monthly or yearly fee under the app’s Pro plan is required.

**Brain Wars** – A bit different than the other apps, Brain Wars features a ranking system to see where you rank against friends or other players from around the world. Players must purchase coins that unlock games. In addition, the app runs ads periodically. You can play all the games in training mode, to practice for those challenges. This one appears to be more game than serious brain training.

The bottom line is that you can have fun solving the puzzles and playing the games provided by these apps. And if you happen to improve brain function, as these apps claim, that’s a bonus.

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