

Top 5 myths about gluten

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Gluten is a protein composite found in wheat and other grains. Gluten gives elasticity to dough, helping it rise and keep its shape.

In the past few years there has been a surge in gluten-free diets and products that claim giving up the protein can lead to healthier lifestyles. A New York Times article recently cited Mintel, a market research company, noting "sales of gluten-free products were expected to total \$10.5 billion last year...[and] estimates the category will produce more than \$15 billion in annual sales in 2016." Even the Girl Scouts have jumped on the proverbial bandwagon, introducing a gluten-free

chocolate chip shortbread cookie into their lineup. But is gluten truly bad for you or has it gained a big market based on a bad reputation?

FIU News consulted with Student Health Services Registered Dietitian Christine Tellez to debunk the top 5 myths about gluten.

1. Gluten is bad for everyone.

"Gluten is a mixture of two proteins found in foods like cereal grains and wheat products," says Tellez. "Most people probably don't even know when they are eating gluten since adverse reactions generally only affect people who have celiac disease or those with a [gluten sensitivity](#)." A doctor can test you for a gluten intolerance through a blood test.

2. Gluten makes you fat.

"Gluten itself cannot make you fat," she says. "Gluten is naturally found in wheat grains, including barley and rye, even beer and soy sauce. Wheat gluten is also added to imitation meats sometimes to improve the texture of the product." Overeating, an unbalanced diet and lack of exercise are still the leading causes of weight gain. In fact, Tellez says gluten-free pastas and breads may actually have more calories and lower fiber, vitamins and minerals than gluten-containing products. "Gluten-free diets really only benefit you if you have a true [gluten intolerance](#) or celiac disease."

3. Not eating gluten will improve your skin.

"Most people probably wouldn't notice a difference," says Tellez. "On average, one in 133 people in the U.S. have [celiac disease](#) which present severe symptoms, including recurring abdominal pain and bad acne, when consuming gluten." If you want to improve your skin, she says, eat

a balanced diet with high fruit and vegetable intake to ensure your body is getting the full spectrum of vitamins and nutrients.

4. Gluten causes allergies.

"Some celebrities have claimed that gluten free diets have improved autism symptoms or autoimmune disorders, but research doesn't support these claims at all," she says. "Gluten isn't like fat. You can't just assume that less is better."

5. Not eating gluten makes you healthier.

"Not eating gluten can actually be bad for you," says Tellez. "Since gluten is present in many of today's staple foods, cutting it out altogether could mean you miss important nutrients." Tellez advises to consult with your doctor if you think you have a [gluten](#) intolerance to determine the best course of action.

Provided by Florida International University

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