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## GLUTEN-FREE ON 4LEAF?

By Dr. Kerry Graff

The 4Leaf way of eating is great for almost all of our chronic diseases: heart disease, diabetes, autoimmune disorders, kidney disease, and cancer--without needing modification. Gluten intolerance is an exception.

Gluten is a protein found in wheat and related grains like rye and barley. Most people have no problem eating gluten-containing foods and they are a good source of nutrients and calories. But some people will develop diarrhea, abdominal pain and other issues if they eat gluten. The most serious form of this is Celiac Disease, a genetic condition in which the body makes antibodies against gluten that then attack the lining of the intestine. Obviously, this is a pretty serious disorder! If you have been diagnosed with Celiac Disease through blood tests or biopsy, avoid gluten at all costs!

SAD contains a lot of gluten, primarily in the processed foods that we eat. Many people who eat SAD feel significantly better when they go gluten-free and thus assume they must be gluten intolerant. However, processed foods contain a lot of substances in addition to

gluten (sugar substitutes, preservatives, dyes, etc.) that can cause GI unhappiness. Many people improve, not because they are avoiding gluten, but because they are not ingesting other things in processed foods. These folks will do great on a whole food, plant-based diet that is not gluten-free.

Some people, however, truly do have gluten intolerance and need to avoid it. The good news is that you can still eat 4Leaf and get all of its wonderful health benefits even if you really must also be gluten-free. You will just need to avoid the foods you know you shouldn't eat. Because gluten is so pervasive in packaged foods, I highly recommend anyone who is diagnosed with gluten intolerance to see a qualified nutritionist to learn how to detect and avoid it. Be sure to let him or her know that in addition to going gluten-free, you also want to go meat, dairy and egg-free!

**So, what's the best approach for someone eating SAD and having gut problems?** Abdominal complaints in folks eating SAD are incredibly common and testing all of these folks for Celiac Disease would be extremely expensive. My recommendation is that if your abdominal symptoms are severe with chronic diarrhea or weight loss, see your doctor and get tested to rule out celiac and other serious diseases now, before embarking on your 4Leaf transition.

If your gut symptoms are milder, I would recommend that you transition to the 4Leaf diet without avoiding glutes and see if your symptoms resolve. The vast majority of the time they will. If you continue to have symptoms, see your doctor before going gluten-free, as the antibody test that confirms celiac disease decreases the longer you avoid gluten. This means that if you have been gluten-free for several months, you may test negative for celiac disease even if you actually have it.