

“Could bread be making me fat?”

After reading over and over again how fiber helps shed pounds, I began eating whole-wheat bread all the time. But when I told my neighbor, who's a nutritionist, what I was doing, she told me to stop! According to her, eating all that wheat will puff me up and may even make me gain weight! Is she right? Should I give up bread for good?

—Carolyn, Carlsbad, CA



So we asked...

Melissa Diane Smith, nutritionist and health educator, author of *Going Against the Grain*

I agree with your friend. You see, wheat is one of the foods most likely to trigger food allergies, yet almost no one who is allergic to wheat realizes it. That's because it won't make you break out in hives or start itching like crazy. What it will do is cause a reaction that triggers water retention and bloating. Having a wheat allergy also has the unfortunate effect of making you crave more wheat, which triggers the allergic reaction again and again. This essentially makes bloating a permanent condition! When that's the case, it's not your fault that you're fat—it's the wheat you eat!

To lose weight by “losing” wheat from your diet...

Do a test run. Give up all foods with wheat for two weeks, and I'll bet you feel more energized, lighter and leaner—and see more satisfaction at the scale. Although not everyone is truly allergic to wheat, almost everyone has some degree of intolerance to gluten—a gluey protein in wheat that's difficult for the body to break down and absorb.

Fuel weight loss with non-wheat fiber. Eating lots of fiber really can speed weight loss. Why? Because fiber makes you feel fuller, which makes you eat less, and it slows digestion, which makes you feel satisfied longer. But who said fiber has to come from wheat bran? Load your plate instead with non-starchy vegetables like broccoli, peppers and peas—foods that are extremely low in calories and extremely high in fiber and nutrients!

Be berry good at breakfast. To ensure you get the perfect mix of high fiber, protein and healthy fats daily, enjoy a power breakfast that includes one cup of any type of berries, one cup of soy milk and a handful of nuts over a wheat-free cereal made with alternative grains such as brown rice, millet, amaranth or quinoa. And for lunch, make sandwiches with breads made of these grains; they're sold at health-food stores.

Americans eat about 300 million sandwiches each day! Ham sandwiches are the most popular, followed by BLTs.



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