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Health, wellness and living your best life – *naturally.*

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Should you go gluten-free? *Separating the facts from the myths*

Remember the low-carb craze of the late-90s and early 2000s? You couldn't go a day without seeing the term on food labels and in marketing or hearing about its weight loss benefits on TV.

Gluten-free is the buzzword of the moment and, like its low-carb cousin just over a decade ago, it has taken over mainstream media. Proponents for a gluten-free diet claim that it can help with weight loss and alleviate a host of different medical conditions.



Gluten is a protein found in wheat and other grains that can cause severe health problems in individuals with celiac disease. To prevent the adverse and potentially life-threatening symptoms of celiac disease, it is recommended that affected individuals eliminate all sources of gluten from their diet.

But while an estimated 85% of consumers are aware of gluten—and 11% would like to reduce their gluten intake—only 1% of the general population actually has celiac disease.

Those who claim that going gluten-free helped them lose weight may

not be wrong, but it is more likely that the weight loss was the result of consuming fewer calories than the presence of gluten itself. Foods that contain gluten—breads, pastas, baked goods—are notoriously caloric.

Some experts do believe that individuals who have not been diagnosed with celiac disease but report health improvements after reducing their gluten intake actually have some degree of gluten intolerance or sensitivity. More research is needed in this area, and there is currently no test to determine whether or not you are sensitive to gluten.

Before going gluten-free, ask yourself why. Are you experiencing celiac-like symptoms such as gastrointestinal upset or fatigue, or are you more interested in dropping weight in the short term? Regardless of your goals, always speak to your healthcare practitioner before starting any new or strict dietary regimen. Cutting out food groups may mean you are missing out on important essential nutrients such as iron and B vitamins.

Sources: Health Canada; SupplySide West 2012 Session: Health and Wellness Trends (Steven French, Natural Marketing Institute); Toronto Star (Sept 29, 2012)



Ask Jenny: *Natural health products*



Jennifer Andrews, M.Sc., a nutritional scientist at Nutrasource Diagnostics, answers all your burning questions about the not-so-straightforward world of natural health products (a.k.a. dietary supplements).

Q: Are there any supplements that I can take to help me lose weight?

A: The short answer is yes, natural health products for weight loss *do* exist in the Canadian marketplace. But—I think you know what I’m going to say next—losing weight isn’t as simple as popping a pill. Think about it: if there really was a miracle cure for over-

weight and obesity, the North American population likely wouldn’t be at such high risk for developing chronic, life-threatening conditions such as cardiovascular disease and type II diabetes.

Natural health products for weight loss may be safe and effective when used in conjunction with a healthy diet and physical activity, but the truth is that many people use these products incorrectly which can have serious health risks.

Health Canada recommends the following tips to avoid serious threats to your health and well-being:

- Never buy products from an online source that refuses to give you a phone number or address
- Do not use health products for off-label weight loss, unless your healthcare practitioner recommended it
- Avoid using multiple products for weight loss (“stacking”)
- Contact your healthcare practitioner immediately if you experience any adverse reactions

For more tips, visit Health Canada’s website.

The bottom line is: All natural health products come with some risk, so be sure to talk to your healthcare practitioner before taking any supplement. Be sure to read the risk information, dose and directions of use listed on the label carefully, and always make sure the product you are taking has an 8-digit natural product number (NPN) or exemption number (EN) on the label—this means the product has been approved for safety, efficacy and quality by the Natural Health Products Directorate of Health Canada.

Source: Health Canada

Submit your question about natural health products and you’ll automatically be entered to win the \$50 cash card! (Yes, even if you already entered)



Have a question? Just ask!
newsletter@nutrasource.ca



What's trending in the world of supplements?

The fascinating field of natural health products is constantly evolving. Here are the latest facts, figures and trends about supplement use and new products to help you stay up-to-date.

Consumer demand :



Tablets & capsules



Bars, powders, beverages

85% of people who take supplements do so because they want to maintain & improve their health

Probiotics & omega-3s

are coming to a grocery store near you—in novel food form! Product developers are increasingly adding these ingredients to foods like breads and juices.

Supplement users take **3.4 different products** on average (up from 2.9 in 2007)

70% of the general population think that the wide range of supplements available makes it easier to manage their health

Two of the most rapidly growing omega-3 products? *Krill oil & pharmaceutical omega-3 products*

Top 3 foods that help protect your ♥



February is **Heart Month** in Canada, but the truth is we should be celebrating this important event all year long. Why? Heart disease remains the second leading cause of death in Canada. You've likely heard that statistic before, but here's the kicker: it's largely *preventable*. Here are a few foods with known cardiovascular benefits to help keep your heart healthy.

Fish

Fatty fish like salmon, sardines and rainbow trout contain omega-3 fatty acids, "good" fats which can reduce your risk of heart disease if consumed in sufficient amounts. Aim for at least two 75-gram servings of fish per week to reap the benefits.

Beans & lentils

Just 3/4 cup of red kidney beans, for example, contains 12 grams of belly-filling (not to mention cholesterol-lowering) fibre—that's almost half of an adult's daily requirements!

Brightly-coloured fruits & vegetables

Taste the rainbow! Dark green, orange, red and purple vegetables are rich in cardioprotective nutrients like vitamin C, beta-carotene and anthocyanins. Red peppers, carrots, broccoli, kale, sweet potatoes and tomatoes are all good bets.

Sources: Heart and Stroke Foundation; Canada's Food Guide

Why you might not be as label-savvy as you think

If you've ever been baffled by a nutrition label or perplexed by an ingredient listing, you are not alone. Understanding food labels can be a daunting task, especially when it comes to making healthier dietary choices.

To illustrate this point, let's consider two hypothetical brands of crackers. Looking at their nutrition facts tables, cracker A is lower in calories and higher in fibre than cracker B, but it also happens to contain triple the amount of sodium than cracker B. Even more baffling: the nutrition information for cracker A is based on a serving size of just 5 crackers, while cracker B is based on 20. This means that you need to quadruple all of the numbers listed on cracker A's label in order to properly compare them. After reading the label even more closely, it appears that cracker A provides 30% of your Daily Value for iron, but cracker B doesn't contain any at all. Which cracker is better? Confused yet?

Reading food labels doesn't have to be intimidating or complicated. Start by looking at the serving size. This number appears just below the Nutrition Facts heading and represents the amount of food that the nutrition information is based on.

To interpret serving size, compare this number to the amount of the food you would normally eat. For instance, if a bag of potato chips lists a serving size of 10 chips, ask yourself if you really would eat just 10 chips. If the answer is no, then the nutrition information on the label is not an accurate representation of what you're eating.

Next, look at the % DV for each nutrient, known as the % Daily Value. These numbers are the benchmark used to evaluate the nutritional content of foods and are based on a healthy diet. In short, the % DV helps you determine whether there is *a little* or *a lot* of a nutrient.

So what exactly is "a little" and "a lot"? Health Canada released

a helpful tool to help consumers understand what the % DV number means:



Now you can use the %DV to understand which food constituents you should be eating more of, and which you should be eating less of. In summary:

Eat more:

- Calcium
- Iron
- Fibre
- Vitamin A
- Vitamin C

Eat less:

- Fat
- Saturated and trans fats
- Sodium

Source: [Health Canada](#)

We want to hear from you!

If you have a question or comment, or would like to suggest a topic for a future issue of NutraLiving, we're all ears! Just drop us a line:



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