

Wheat and Gluten Intolerance / A Broken Commandment

Carol: Hello, how are you? I'm Carol, and this is *Women of Hope*. Good to be with you today! Thanks for having us.

Tammy: And I'm Tammy - hi! I've been busy learning a lot of interesting information about wheat. There are so many ways to use it and I'd like to share them with you. You might learn some new ways today. Wheat is one of the most common and important foods in the world.

Carol: So, tell us what wheat is exactly...

Tammy: Wheat is a grain - the seed of a type of grass. The grain has a dry brown outer husk. Have you ever cut a grain in half? You can see that most of the inside is white and starchy. There is a little section where the new plant will grow if you plant it...that is called the wheat germ, and it contains protein and a little fat.

Carol: I suppose wheat is good for you?

Tammy: Yes, but of course it depends how you eat it, and how much you eat. Most of it is starch...energy food for living. Starch digests more slowly than sugars, which also give energy...that's why starch satisfies you for longer. The protein helps to repair and build new cells. Wheat also is a very good source of many vitamins and minerals which are needed for our health. And the outside is good fiber, to keep our bowels working well.

But often we only eat the starchy part. When white flour is made, the wheat germ and the husk are thrown away, but that is where most of the food value is.

Carol: The same is true for rice and other grains. Whole grains are always much better for us. But I've often wondered; why would the miller throw away the good wheat germ?

Tammy: Mostly because it has some fat, and fat can become rancid and spoil the flour. It doesn't keep as long as refined white flour. It tastes a bit different too- I love it, but if you are used to white flour, it might take you a while to get used to it.

If you can, try to cook with whole grain flour. Buy it in small quantities and store it in a cool place, with a tight lid so the air and insects don't spoil it. You can mix whole grain and white flours together if you prefer.

Carol: I guess the most common way we eat wheat would be in bread. Almost all cultures make bread - flat breads, yeast breads...

Tammy: ...umm...pancakes, rolls, pizzas...

Carol: ...naan, chappatis...

Tammy: ...and hot cross buns! What kind of breads do you have where you live? Do you make bread yourself or buy it?... We often call bread 'the staff of life' because it's so important in our diet. And nearly all bread is made with wheat. So are pasta and couscous, the common foods in some Mediterranean countries.

Carol: I have to admit I prefer using wheat flour for cakes and puddings, sauces, biscuits and cookies - all those sweet delicious treats that we love. Yumm! But we shouldn't eat these too often, should we? What's your favorite?

Tammy: Cracked wheat is useful too. I wonder if *you* ever use it? It's also known as semolina, burghul, rava and dalia. It's a great ingredient in salads and you can use it instead of rice. You just have to soak the cracked wheat in clean cold water for an hour or so to soften it. My favorite way to eat it is in a Middle Eastern salad called tabbouli, with lots of parsley and mint, tomatoes and lemon juice. You can also make porridge with it.

Carol: I recently learned about another way of using wheat...sprouting it. That means starting the seed growing into a new plant. Sprouted wheat is extremely good for you and very cheap. I read that sprouts have 3 to 5 times more vitamin content than the seed they sprouted from.

Tammy: That's amazing!

Carol: It is... And as for Vitamin C, sprouts have over 30 times the vitamin C content of the original seed!

Tammy: Wow!

Carol: They are a living food, where you get all the goodness of the plant.

Tammy: So how do you sprout wheat?

Carol: The same way you sprout any grain, or legumes like mung beans.

You will need a large glass or clear plastic jar, and a piece of net or loosely woven cloth. Fill the jar half full of clean water, add a good handful of wheat grains, cover and leave it over-night. The next morning strain off the water and rinse the wheat with fresh water. Cover the jar with the cloth and hold it in place with a rubber band or string, to keep out any insects.

Place the jar on its side facing towards a window so it receives light, but not direct sunlight. Rinse the wheat 2 or 3 times a day - more if the weather is hot and dry. Don't let it dry out completely. After two days you will see that your seeds have come to life, sprouting little roots and shoots. If the sprouts are not green, then they need more light. It only takes a few hours of light for the sprouts to turn green and come alive with nutrients.

Tammy: So, how do you eat them?

Carol: You can eat them raw as a tasty snack, or put them in salads or in cooked dishes just before you serve them. They are best raw or cooked quickly. Eat them from the second day onwards, when you can see the green shoots growing. If you leave them a day or two more, they grow more leaves, but don't leave them too long - eat them when they are fresh and crunchy. To slow down their growth, put them in a cool dark place.

In my home, I like to start another jar of sprouts every second day. Then I always have these very cheap, delicious and nutritious vegetables with very little effort!

Tammy: Sounds good, I'll try it! Let me make sure I can remember what I need to do:

- Fill a jar half full of clean water and add a good handful of wheat grains...
- Cover and leave it over-night...next day strain off the water and rinse the wheat with fresh water.

Carol: 'Uh huh'...

Tammy:

- Cover the jar with the cloth and hold it in place with a rubber band or string...
- Place the jar on its side facing a window so it receives light...
- Rinse the wheat 2 or 3 times a day - more if the weather is hot and dry.

We're talking today about wheat, and different ways to use it. We said that wheat is good for you...but that's not true for everybody.

Carol: Why not?

Tammy: Some people cannot digest some of the proteins in wheat and can get quite sick, with stomach pains and other symptoms that don't get better.

Wheat contains a protein called gluten. Gluten is what makes dough soft and stretchy. But some people can't tolerate it at all. It causes their body to react against itself, so that part of the small bowel - the lining that absorbs the goodness in the food - becomes damaged.

This is called celiac disease, and is actually quite common. It's a disease that seems to run in families, but people of any age can get it. Our friend Fran's husband has it.

Carol: How do you know if you have it?

Tammy: I asked Dr Kerryn about that. She said it's often hard to diagnose, because different people show different symptoms. The most common problems are pain in the tummy...nausea...and a feeling of bloating. You may also pass a lot of gas...and have bowel problems, like diarrhea or constipation. Often people lose weight and are tired and pale. Or they may show signs of malnutrition, such as low iron or vitamins. That was what Fran's husband was like; thin and pale, with a lot of stomach cramps. But other people gain weight and don't have many symptoms at all!

These problems come on gradually but just don't get better. If a doctor thinks you might have celiac disease, they can look inside your gut while you're under an anesthetic, in hospital, or do a special blood test. But that's not always possible. So, if you have these problems and you can't find another cause such as worms, you could try making some changes to what you eat for a few weeks.

Carol: So what changes would you make?

Tammy: Dr Kerry said that to treat celiac disease you must not eat *anything at all* made from barley, rye, oats or wheat. She told me a way to remember these -spell the word BROW - B,R,O,W - barley, rye, oats, wheat.

Carol: That's a good way to remember.

Tammy: That's right... Your brow is the part of your face above your eyes. You have eye-brows. So that's what you remember – 'brow'.

Carol: Wouldn't it be difficult not to be able to eat all those grains?

Tammy: Fran said it was a bit difficult at first. She had to check out lots of foods till she worked out what was safe. Gluten is in lots of canned foods. For example, beer contains gluten, and often soy sauce does.

Carol: I wouldn't have guessed those!

Tammy: You can try avoiding these foods completely and see if you feel better. After a few months you could try eating those grains again, and see if you get sick again. If you do, you probably have celiac disease.

But you won't starve, I promise! - You can still eat rice, millet, corn, potatoes, sago, sweet potato, and all fruits, vegetables, meat, fish, eggs, spices and milk. Everything else, in fact! Just not barley, rye, oats or wheat. Let's say it together – B-R-O-W...barley – rye – oats – wheat.

Carol: Does a person with celiac disease get better?

Tammy: Definitely. Fran's husband is really well, now that he sticks to the right foods. He will eat this gluten-free diet for the rest of his life – the disease won't go away. There is no medicine to cure it, though you might need vitamin or mineral supplements while your bowel is healing. But if you eat the right food, your bowel *will* heal and your health will improve a lot.

Carol: Is it really worth the bother?

Tammy: Celiac disease makes some people very ill, and it can cause some other serious health problems, including bowel cancer.

Dr Kerry said that it can *even* make it hard to conceive and carry a healthy baby. But if you avoid all gluten, you will have no more risk than anyone else. It's a bit of a nuisance, but is *well* worthwhile. And you can still make bread, cakes and all those other yummy foods, using other flours, like rice, corn, soy, millet, sorghum, buckwheat, potato and tapioca flours.

Carol: OK, I think I can remember that - nothing made with barley, rye, oats and wheat for people with celiac disease. Thanks for all that information Tammy.

We've been talking about wheat. Are you going to try sprouting seeds? Yes, wheat is a good food, and it can be used in lots of ways...

Tammy: ...but some people have something in them that stops their body using it properly.

Carol: And that reminds me of something we talked about recently - God's law. It's a good gift from God, but something in *us* stops *us* using it properly.

Ros is with us again to tell us more about this problem. Hi Ros, good to see you again.

Ros: Hello, my friends. Do you remember the Bible stories that I told you recently?...

Tammy: I do... First God rescued the Israelites, Abraham's descendants, from Egypt, where they had been slaves...

Carol: ...and then we heard about how God gave the prophet Moses the ten commandments, and other laws that made up the agreement between God and the Israelites. They were rules to protect them and help them live good lives.

Ros: Did you remember too? ...And the people all agreed that they would keep these rules - don't forget that.

Well, Moses went back up the mountain. He was there, listening to God, for a long time - 40 days. All the people were waiting eagerly at the foot of the mountain, because they had been warned not to come near.

Let's listen to the story from the Bible, God's word, to hear what happened next. It might surprise you.
(Based on Exodus 32, GNB)

When the people saw how long Moses was away, they began to get restless and anxious. So, they gathered around Aaron - he was the brother of Moses. They had a strange request.

'Come, make us some gods who will show us where to go.' They said. 'As for this fellow Moses, who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what's happened to him.'

Tammy: How could they say that? They knew that it was God, not Moses, who had brought them out of Egypt. Surely, they knew he was the only true and real God! And how could they think they could *make* a god to take his place?

Ros: I guess they were used to the idea of lots of idols, from their time in Egypt, so they went back to that idea. They were not prepared to wait for the only true God to show them the way.

Now this will surprise you: Aaron did *not* correct them, he went along with them. He told them to bring him all their jewelry, the earrings they had brought from Egypt, and he melted down the gold and made an idol in the shape of a bull calf. The people were pleased. They said '*This* is your god, O Israel, that brought you up out of Egypt'.

So the people came and bowed down to the idol. They sacrificed animals, and then they sat down and ate and drank a lot, and had a party that turned into a drunken, immoral orgy.

Carol: Sounds like they broke most of the ten commandments in one day! They had other gods besides the LORD... they made an idol, ...they committed adultery, ...they used God's name for wrong purposes...

Ros: They did! God saw this, of course...he can see *everything*. He told Moses what was happening down at the bottom of the mountain. God said he would punish them...and he did. But he also did not forget his promises to Abraham. Remember? ...He had promised to *bless* them, make them a *great nation* and give them a *land*. He was angry and disappointed, but he still loved them and he would not destroy them completely. But they had a lot to learn before they could live in the land God had promised them. And they learnt it in hard ways.

Carol: That's a rather sad story, Ros. Those poor people had just become free, and here they were, forgetting what the true and living God had done for them. They turned to false idols and behaved really badly - just like the people they had left behind, who didn't know God.

Ros: I think how disappointed God must have been in them. But I also think that he must often be disappointed in *me*. This story is a picture of all of us humans. We often know the *right* things to do...we have God's laws...we might really mean to do the right thing...but we can't keep them...and certainly not by *ourselves*. Something in us stops us using God's good laws properly. Let me ask you; do you *always* do the things you know are right? Hmm?... Do *you* ever ignore good rules, and just do what you feel like?

Tammy: ...I have to admit I do sometimes. Even though I know how God wants me to live, sometimes I'm impatient and I want my own way. Do you?...

Ros: Well, I'm guilty too... Sometimes I feel ashamed when I think that God sees everything I do, and knows everything I think. I guess it shows that we can have good laws, and know them well, but it doesn't guarantee that we'll be good people...all the time!

The Bible often calls this our sinful nature. Don't get concerned about the word 'sin' - it just means this thing in human nature that makes us likely to do wrong things. We are all sinners!

But *there is hope!* We need God to change our hearts, wash them clean. The great news is, he can do that, because of his son Jesus! Jesus came to this earth as a man. He kept God's Law perfectly, and then he gave his life for us, taking the punishment we deserved, taking away the shame we had. The Bible says this: 'The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So, God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And...God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins.' (Romans 8:3 NLT)

Carol: So, we can't meet God's holy standards by our own efforts, can we? We can't even meet our *own* standards! We need to put our trust in Jesus and what *he* did for us. And then God washes us clean inside! He loves us, he never wants there to be any problem between himself and us. So, each time we fail, we can pray and confess to him, and he promises to wash us clean from everything that makes us ashamed. (1 John 1:9)

Ros: That's right, Carol. And not only that, he helps us, day by day, to live better...to do the things that please him and make our lives better. I am not even close to perfect, but I can see that God has really changed me from the inside, and that gives me great hope too.

Tammy: We need that hope, don't we? God hasn't given up on you, or me. That's good!

Carol: We've had a lot to think about today, haven't we? How did you feel about today's story? Did you think: 'Yes, I'm like that too'? Maybe you need to pray to God to change you from the inside out.

Tammy: It's time for us to go, my friend. We would love to hear from you; you can write, care of this station. I hope you will be with us again at the same time next week. We'll be talking about...

Carol: Goodbye