

# Gluten Sensitivity in Athletes

## Athlete Scenario

*I am a club cyclist who has struggled with intestinal problems that interfere with training and competition. Recently diagnosed with gluten sensitivity due to Celiac disease, I learned that gluten reduces the absorption of nutrients and leads to poor nutrition and lack of energy. I want to understand what foods I can eat to feel better and enjoy training and racing again.*

## Nutrition Goals for Athletes with Gluten Sensitivity

- Follow a gluten-free diet as a permanent eating style. Gluten is a protein substance present in grains such as wheat, rye, barley, triticale, and spelt. Although oats do not contain gluten, oats may be cross-contaminated with gluten-containing grains.
- Eliminate symptoms such as indigestion, abdominal pain, diarrhea, and chronic fatigue that are associated with exposure to gluten.
- Improve energy levels during exercise.
- Prevent complications of Celiac disease such as anemia, vitamin and mineral deficiencies, and bone mineral disturbances.

## Performance Foods for Gluten-Free Diets Boost

- Whole grain and enriched gluten-free carbohydrate sources: rice, corn, flax, quinoa, amaranth, millet, potatoes, buckwheat, soy, tapioca, wild rice
- Protein sources: meat, poultry, seafood, un-breaded fish, eggs, dairy foods, nuts, seeds
- Healthy fats: vegetable oils, flaxseed, tuna, salmon, nuts, seeds
- Fruits, fruit beverages, fruit drinks
- Vegetables (fresh, frozen, canned), vegetable juices
- Snacks such as corn chips, rice cakes, gluten-free pretzels
- Gluten-free specialty sports foods such as gluten-free sports bars and gels

Written by SCAN registered dietitians (RDs). The key to optimal meal planning for athletes is individualization. For personalized nutrition plans contact a SCAN sports dietitian or Board Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics (CSSD) by accessing "Find a SCAN Dietitian" at [www.scandpg.org](http://www.scandpg.org) | 800.249.2875.



## Tips to Take With You

1. Read labels carefully to ensure that foods are gluten-free. Gluten may be present in un-expected places, such as stabilizers, sauces, malt, medications, and supplements.
2. A food diary is useful in identifying sources of unintended gluten consumption.
3. Gluten-free foods are available in large grocery stores, specialty markets, and on the Internet. When traveling, bring gluten-free foods; inform restaurants and airlines of your needs.

## Contact SCAN

Web site: [www.scandpg.org](http://www.scandpg.org)  
Voice: 800.249.2875