



A BODY BY DESIGN® FIELD GUIDE

BODY by *Design*®  
Guide to *Going*  
Gluten-Free

*A genomics-backed, no-deprivation playbook  
for the human whose body is begging for a break —  
even if her brain isn't quite ready to hear it.*

# 01 Why You're Reading This

· SECTION

*You don't need another diet. You need answers.*

You're tired. You're foggy. Your sleep is off. Maybe your gut feels weird in a way you can't fully articulate. Maybe your skin is acting up. Maybe you've been doing all the "right" things and your body is still throwing tantrums.

And someone — a friend, a podcast, your own gut feeling, possibly your DNA report — has whispered the same word in your ear:

— *gluten* —

*So here you are.*

# 02 First, the Basics

· SECTION

*What actually is gluten?*

Gluten is a protein found in certain grains. It's what gives bread its chewy texture, what makes pizza dough stretch, what holds cookies together. It's not inherently evil — humans have eaten it for thousands of years. But the way gluten shows up in modern food, and the way our bodies respond to it, has changed a lot.

## **THE GRAINS THAT CONTAIN GLUTEN BY DEFAULT:**

- Wheat (and everything made from it — bread, pasta, crackers, cookies, baked goods, most cereal)
- Barley (most beer, malted anything, a lot of "natural flavors")

- Rye (rye bread, some whiskeys)
- Triticale (a wheat-rye hybrid you'll see in specialty breads)
- Most oats — technically gluten-free, but cross-contaminated unless they're labeled "certified gluten-free"

#### **THE SNEAKY PLACES GLUTEN HIDES (A PREVIEW):**

- Soy sauce (contains wheat in almost every standard form)
- Many sausages, deli meats, and processed meats (wheat-based binders)
- Most beer
- Salad dressings, marinades, seasoning blends, sauces
- Communion wafers, some medications, even some lipsticks and cosmetics

Bottom line: if it's been processed and you didn't make it from scratch, assume it might contain gluten until proven otherwise.

## 03 Why Going Gluten-Free is Worth the Effort

· SECTION

*Three reasons your body might be quietly begging you for a break.*

### 01

#### Immune dysregulation

Gluten can trigger inflammatory immune responses even in people without celiac disease. This shows up as autoimmune flares, mysterious skin issues (eczema, psoriasis, rashes that come and go), thyroid drama, joint pain, and that vague "I feel like I'm fighting something all the time" feeling that nothing seems to fix.

If your immune system is constantly low-grade activated, your energy, your mood, and your skin are paying the tax.

## 02

### Gut issues galore

Bloating, IBS-style symptoms, intestinal permeability (the thing everyone calls "leaky gut"), histamine reactions, food sensitivities that seem to multiply year over year. Your gut lining is one cell thick — that's it — and gluten can absolutely chip away at it, especially when you're already dealing with dysbiosis, stress, or hormonal shifts.

When the gut goes, everything goes. Nutrient absorption, mood, immunity, hormones, weight regulation — they all run through that one-cell-thick wall.

## 03

### The nervous system connection

This is the one most people don't see coming.

Gluten-related compounds can wreak havoc on your nervous system, showing up as anxiety, brain fog, insomnia, irritability, mood swings, even sensory overwhelm. There's a deeper biochemical mechanism behind this — and it's not actually gluten itself doing all the damage. It's something gluten happens to deliver in concentrated, sneaky doses.

We'll get into the actual science later in this guide, because it's worth understanding once you've felt the difference.

## 04 What to Expect (the good stuff)

· SECTION

*Most people focus on what they're losing. Let's flip that.*

I want to plant some specific seeds in your head about what going gluten-free actually does for you.

**WITHIN THE FIRST 1 TO 2 WEEKS, MOST PEOPLE NOTICE:**

Mental and cognitive clarity that wasn't there before. Brain fog lifts. You'll find words faster, remember names better, finish sentences without the "what was I saying" pause.

Energy that doesn't crash. Especially the afternoon dip — gone, or dramatically softer.

Better bowel movements. The most reliable early signal. Bloating goes down, transit normalizes.

Better sleep. Falling asleep faster, staying asleep longer, waking up actually rested.

A trimmer middle and metabolic support. Bloat reduction, more midsection definition, less puffiness. Blood sugar stabilizes — you stop riding the crash-craving rollercoaster.

**OVER THE NEXT 4 TO 12 WEEKS, DEEPER SHIFTS UNFOLD:**

Brighter, clearer skin. Less reactivity, less inflammation, fewer mysterious flares.

Balanced hormones. Less PMS reactivity, calmer cycles, more even moods. Estrogen detox pathways work better when the gut is intact.

Mood resilience. The "off" days are softer. The emotional swings flatten.

Better nutrient absorption. When your gut lining stops getting hammered, iron, B12, magnesium start landing where they're supposed to.

And so much more. Calmer immune function, less joint pain, fewer low-grade infections, less histamine drama, sharper workouts.

*This is not about deprivation. This is about un-flooding a system that's been overworked for years and finally giving yourself back to yourself.*

*Right. Let's get you set up.*

# 05 Start Here

· SECTION

## *The One-to-One Swap Audit*

Before you walk into a grocery store, before you Google a single recipe, before you tell anyone you're "doing the gluten-free thing" — open your fridge and your pantry.

For every gluten-containing item you eat regularly, find the closest gluten-free version that satisfies the same craving. That's it. That's step one.

Don't worry about ingredient quality yet. We're not optimizing — we're swapping. Optimize later. Right now we're just making sure you don't feel deprived, because deprivation is the #1 reason these protocols fail.

### **YOUR QUICK AUDIT CHECKLIST**

- Sandwich bread
- Bagels / English muffins
- Tortillas / wraps
- Pasta
- Pizza dough
- Crackers
- Pretzels / chips
- Cereal / granola
- Cookies / baked goods
- Pancake or waffle mix
- Beer (yes, I see you)
- Soy sauce — swap for tamari or coconut aminos

# 06 How Strict Do You Need to Be?

· SECTION

*A spectrum, not a rulebook.*

Going gluten-free is a spectrum, not a rulebook. The level of intervention you need depends on your sensitivity, your current gut integrity, stress, hormonal state, and whether you have an existing autoimmune or histamine situation going on.

Most people only ever need the basics. So before you read the rest of this guide and accidentally feel like everything in your kitchen is suddenly off-limits — read this first.

## TIER 1

### Just go gluten-free

*Where most people start and stay.*

*Cut the obvious sources. Use the swap audit.*

*Give it 4 to 6 weeks.*

## TIER 2

### GF + higher-glutamate, higher-histamine foods

*For the noticeably sensitive. Reduce, don't eliminate.*

#### EXAMPLES

oats · oat milk · processed meats · fermented foods · soy sauce · miso · bouillon · tomato paste · anchovies · heavy collagen + whey

## TIER 3

### Micro ingredients

*Rare. Usually temporary.*

*Almost always practitioner-led.*

#### EXAMPLES

MSG · hydrolyzed proteins · "natural flavors" · yeast extract · citric acid · carrageenan · most commercial dressings + seasonings

# 07 The Sneaky Sources

· SECTION

*For more advanced intervention.*

*If you're at Tier 1, this is a bookmark for later. Come back when your symptoms tell you it's time to consider a deeper layer.*

## **TIER 2: HIGHER-GLUTAMATE, HIGHER-HISTAMINE FOODS**

Whole and minimally-processed foods that carry naturally higher concentrations of free glutamate and/or histamine. They only become a problem if you're noticeably sensitive.

- Oats and oat milk — yes, even certified-GF. The avenin protein can cross-react in sensitive people; oats also run higher on the histamine scale than rice or buckwheat.
- Processed and cured meats: deli meats, sausage, cured meats, bacon, prosciutto, salami
- Fermented foods: kombucha, vinegars, soy sauce, miso, kimchi, fermented condiments
- Corn products: corn starch, corn syrup, heavily processed corn-based snacks
- Soy in volume: soy sauce, soy protein isolate, miso, tofu in heavy daily use
- Tomato concentrates: tomato paste, sun-dried tomatoes, jarred tomato sauce
- Mushroom-heavy preparations: mushroom broth, mushroom powder, bouillon-based stocks
- Anchovies, fish sauce, sardines, and other concentrated marine sources
- Bouillon cubes and commercial stock concentrates
- Nutritional yeast (when used heavily, daily)
- Regular high-dose use of: collagen powder, bone broth, gelatin, L-glutamine, whey protein

## **TIER 3: THE MICRO-INGREDIENT REFERENCE LIST**

Before you panic, remember: Tier 3 isn't necessary for everyone, forever. It's a reference of the micro-ingredients — the additives, preservatives, flavor enhancers, and label-hiding compounds that can carry free glutamate. If you're not in an active healing phase with a practitioner, this list is not your problem. Bookmark it; don't memorize it.

- MSG (and its 50+ aliases — see the label-reading section)

- Hydrolyzed proteins (corn, soy, vegetable, yeast)
- Yeast extract / autolyzed yeast
- "Natural flavors"
- Citric acid / citrate
- Carrageenan
- Malt extract / malt flavoring
- Soy lecithin (in volume)
- Modified food starch (when source unidentified)
- Most commercial salad dressings (especially vinegar-based)
- Most commercial dry seasoning blends
- Bouillon cubes and stock concentrates with seasoning blends

*The pattern across all of this: the more processed the source, the more free glutamate it contains. That's the only rule of thumb you actually need.*

## 08 The Deeper Story

· SECTION

*It's actually about glutamate.*

Remember how I mentioned a nervous system connection earlier — that gluten delivers something else in concentrated, sneaky doses, and that "something else" is what's actually doing a lot of the damage? Here's what that is.

Glutamate is a non-essential amino acid found in gluten, but also in other grains, preservatives, seasonings, and a lot of weirdly innocent-looking foods. It's also a neurotransmitter — specifically, the most abundant excitatory neurotransmitter in your body.

In a perfectly tuned system, your body converts glutamate into GABA — the calm, zen, take-the-edge-off neurotransmitter — and you go about your day feeling like a regulated human being. Beautiful.

The problem starts when your genes don't make that conversion efficiently. A lot of people carry SNPs that slow this conversion down. When that happens, glutamate piles up. And in excess, it's neurotoxic.

#### **WHAT DOES EXCESS GLUTAMATE ACTUALLY FEEL LIKE?**

- Anxiousness that comes from nowhere
- Brain fog you can't shake
- Insomnia or wired-but-tired sleep
- Irritability with a short fuse
- Tics, sensory overwhelm, intrusive thoughts
- Bloating, food sensitivities, histamine flares
- A nagging feeling that you can't fully relax, even when nothing is wrong

It also impairs methylation, depletes glutathione (your master detoxifier), and chips away at gut integrity.

Which is the genomic-grade explanation for why so many people who go gluten-free report sleeping better, thinking clearer, and feeling like a new species within weeks.

*You're not just cutting wheat. You're un-flooding your nervous system.*

## 09 A Word on the Hero of This Whole Guide

· SECTION

*Potatoes – God's gift to the gluten-free.*

Every form. Russets, sweet, fingerlings, purple, gold. Baked, mashed, roasted, hash-browned, fried-at-home, soup'd, cubed, smashed, twice-baked, you name it.

Potatoes are naturally, wildly, gloriously gluten-free – and they're one of the most versatile, satisfying staples in the entire food world. They are the blank canvas your dinners deserve. They make pancakes (literally). They make gnocchi (when you make it from scratch). They

turn a sad piece of grilled chicken into a whole meal.

The only watch-out is cross-contamination when dining out — shared fryers at most restaurants also fry breaded items, which means even a "plain" french fry can pick up gluten in the oil. If you're celiac or highly sensitive, ask whether the kitchen has a dedicated GF fryer. If you're not, this is rarely a real issue, and a baked or roasted potato will almost always be safe.

*At home? Go absolutely nuts.*

## 10 Everything Else That Stays on the Table

· SECTION

*This is not the elimination Olympics.*

Other foods that are typically well-tolerated and don't need to go anywhere:

- Rice (in any form — your other new best friend)
- Quinoa (technically a seed, not a grain)
- Buckwheat (also not a grain — confusing, I know)
- Mushrooms, spinach, peas, turkey, eggs, fresh herbs, basically every whole food
- Legumes in raw, unprocessed form (with normal cooking)
- Most fresh meats, fish, eggs, produce, and unsweetened nut butters

*In whole, raw, unprocessed form, the glutamate content of most foods is low enough to be a non-issue. The villain is processing — not nature.*

# 11

## Where to Find Your New Favorites

· SECTION

*A grocery store tour for the newly gluten-free.*

*The best food in any grocery store is still hugging the perimeter.*

Produce. Fresh meat and seafood. Eggs. Fresh herbs. That hasn't changed and it isn't going to. We're adding a few new aisles to your repertoire — not abandoning the basics.

So shop the edges first. Then come find the swaps and the supporting cast in the sections below. We'll save the dietary dogma debate for another day. Right now, we're just helping you find a sandwich.

### 01 — Start Here

## The Health / Specialty Section

The most curated GF real estate in the building. GF flours, baking mixes, granolas, oats labeled "certified gluten-free," specialty pasta, and the brands that take ingredient quality seriously instead of just slapping "GF" on the label. This is your home base for stocking the pantry.

### 02 — Your Unexpected Goldmine

## The Frozen Section

Here's what nobody tells you when you go gluten-free: the freezer section is where the actual good GF bread lives. GF flours behave differently than wheat flours, and freezing keeps the texture honest. The best GF breads, English muffins, pizza crusts, waffles, dinner rolls, and burger buns are sold frozen. If you've been wandering the bread aisle hoping a loaf jumps out at you, you've been hunting in the wrong jungle.

03

## The Bakery / Fresh Bread Section

Some grocery stores now have a dedicated GF bakery shelf or fresh GF bread baked in-house. Whole Foods, Sprouts, and Erewhon are typically reliable. If your store doesn't have one, ask — staff usually know exactly which products to point you to.

04

## The Snack Aisle

GF crackers, chips, cookies, and snack bars have multiplied like rabbits over the past five years. Look for brands that lead with "gluten-free" rather than ones that "happen to be" gluten-free — the lead-with brands tend to take ingredient quality more seriously.

05

## The International Aisle

This is where most newly-GF folks miss out. Mexican corn tortillas, rice noodles, plantain chips, mochi, Indian papadums (some are GF), Japanese rice crackers — entire cuisines built around naturally GF staples, sitting right there waiting for you.

06 — *With one warning*

## The Bulk Bins

Lots of naturally GF options here — lentils, beans, quinoa, rice, seeds. But: cross-contamination is real. If a store uses the same scoop across bulk bins, gluten dust travels. If you're highly sensitive, skip the bulk bins and buy bagged.

# 12 Off the Beaten Path

· SECTION

*The local treasure hunt.*

The chain grocery store is your foundation. The local scene is where you build a real life around eating this way.

- Independent gluten-free bakeries. They exist in almost every mid-size city now. Search "gluten-free bakery near me" on Google Maps. Check Instagram hashtags for your city + #glutenfree.
- Farmers' markets. Almost everything sold direct from a farmer is naturally GF. You'll often find the local GF baker, the GF granola maker, the GF tortilla maker — they all set up at markets before they go retail.
- Co-ops and natural food stores. Smaller than Whole Foods, more curated than a regular grocery. Often the only place in town carrying certain GF brands.
- Specialty restaurants with dedicated GF kitchens. Find Me Gluten Free is a free app where the celiac community ranks restaurants by reliability — even non-celiacs find it useful.

*You're not losing food. You're gaining a new map of your city.*

# 13 Dining Out

· SECTION

*Without white-knuckling it.*

The single biggest reason people fall off the GF wagon isn't temptation. It's social pressure. Let's actually talk about dining out — by cuisine, with strategies that don't require you to be a martyr or a pain.

The simple-ingredients rule: when in doubt, order something that arrives looking like it did when it was alive. Protein + vegetable + rice or potato is almost universally safe. Sauces and

breadings are where things get sneaky.

## Mexican · yes, even Chipotle

One of the friendliest cuisines for GF eaters because corn tortillas are the default in most authentic spots.

### ORDER

- Fajitas (skip flour tortillas, ask for corn)
- Tacos on corn tortillas
- Burrito bowls (skip the burrito, double the protein)
- Grilled meats — carnitas, carne asada, chicken
- Salsa, guacamole, beans (verify beans aren't cooked with flour)

### SKIP

- × Flour tortillas, anything battered
- × Queso (often thickened with flour)
- × Some marinades

## Italian — The hardest cuisine on paper. The easiest if you order strategically.

### ORDER

- Grilled fish, chicken, or steak with grilled or roasted veggies
- Risotto (rice — naturally GF, just verify no flour-based thickener)
- Polenta
- Caprese, antipasto, salads (skip the croutons)
- GF pasta if available — ask

### SKIP

- × Pasta (unless GF), bread basket
- × Anything breaded, gnocchi (most are wheat-based)
- × Pizza unless they have a GF crust in a separate oven

## Asian · Chinese, Thai, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese

The hidden trap here is soy sauce, which contains wheat in almost every standard form.

### ORDER

- Ask for tamari or coconut aminos instead of soy sauce
- Rice noodles instead of wheat noodles
- Sashimi-style sushi (rolls often hide imitation crab, tempura, panko)
- Vietnamese is one of the most GF-friendly cuisines — pho, fresh spring rolls, com tam, bun, banh xeo
- Korean BBQ — rice + grilled meat + side dishes

### SKIP

- × Tempura, "crispy" anything, dumplings
- × Bánh mì (the baguette is wheat)
- × Soy sauce dishes, hoisin sauce

## Steakhouse · American — Usually the safest format on the menu.

### ORDER

- Steak, fish, chicken — straight-grilled
- Baked potato or rice
- Steamed or roasted vegetables
- Salad without croutons

### SKIP

- × The bread basket (just don't put it on the table)

## Breakfast / Brunch

### ORDER

- Eggs in any form — omelets, scrambles, hard-boiled
- Bacon, sausage (verify it's GF — many contain bread crumbs)
- Fresh fruit, avocado
- Hash browns (verify they're cooked in a dedicated fryer)

### SKIP

- × Toast, pancakes, waffles
- × French toast, biscuits, muffins

### TRAVEL-SPECIFIC STRATEGY

- Airport food: protein boxes, hard-boiled eggs, salads (skip croutons and dressing if unsure), fresh fruit, most coffee shop egg bites. Hippeas, RX bars, and most jerky brands are GF travel-bag friendly.
- Hotel breakfast: scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage (verify), fresh fruit, hash browns. Skip the pastry table no matter how good it looks.
- Long flights: pack snacks. Always. A handful of nuts, a protein bar, an apple. Future you will thank present you.

#### — THE SCRIPT FOR ASKING —

*"Hi, I'm gluten-free. Can you check with the kitchen on which dishes work? Anything grilled-and-simple is great."*

*"I have a gluten sensitivity. Can you make this without [bread/croutons/pasta] and confirm the [sauce/marinade/seasoning] is gluten-free?"*

*Most restaurants are very used to this question now. Tip well.*

# 14 How to Read a Label Like a Detective

· SECTION

*The 50+ aliases hiding in plain sight.*

The FDA only requires "MSG" to be listed when an ingredient contains 99%+ free glutamate. Below that threshold, manufacturers can hide it under 50+ different names.

- "Natural flavors" (the queen of disguises)
- Yeast extract / autolyzed yeast
- Hydrolyzed protein, hydrolyzed yeast, hydrolyzed corn
- Soy protein isolate
- Maltodextrin (often corn-derived, can be gluten-cross-contaminated)
- Modified food starch (verify source)
- "Spices" (legal cover-all)
- Carrageenan
- Malt extract / malt flavoring (almost always wheat or barley-derived)

*The detective rule: if a product has more than five ingredients and three of them sound like a chemistry experiment, put it back.*

# 15 Read this Twice

· SECTION

*The permission slip.*

You don't have to be perfect. You won't be.

The goal of the first 4 to 6 weeks is to learn your new defaults — the bread you actually like, the restaurant your spouse loves that has a real GF menu, the airport snacks you can grab on autopilot. Perfect compliance isn't the metric. Consistency is.

You don't have to become "the gluten-free person" at parties.

Don't lecture. Don't post your grocery list. Eat what you eat, ask for what you need, and move on. The goal is for this to become invisible to everyone except you.

You don't have to flinch at slip-ups.

A bite of birthday cake at your kid's party is not the end of your reset. Note how you feel afterward. That data is more useful than guilt.

Build a "go-to" list, not a "never" list.

Restriction-based mindsets fail. Identity-based mindsets stick. "I'm someone who eats this way" lasts. "I'm not allowed to eat that" doesn't.

Tolerance is real.

Some days you'll process a small amount of cross-contamination just fine. Other days — high-stress weeks, sleep-deprived weeks, hormonal weeks — you'll feel a single misstep for three days. Both are true. Adjust to your bandwidth.

# 16 Once You've Felt the Difference

· SECTION

*The reintroduction game.*

After the first 4 to 6 weeks of consistent eating-this-way, your body will have done a lot of housekeeping. GABA levels rebalance. Inflammation cools. Gut lining tightens. You'll feel the difference.

*Then you get to play the game.*

Reintroduction isn't about going back. It's about learning. Once you've felt the contrast between "elevated glutamate me" and "regulated glutamate me," you can experiment with reintroduction and pay attention to:

- How your sleep responds the night after
- Whether brain fog returns the next morning
- Whether anxiety creeps in unexpectedly
- Whether your gut goes weird

Some people find they can have sourdough at a great restaurant once a month with no issue. Others find that even one beer ruins three days. Both are valid data points. Your tolerance is yours.

For some, the goal is never again. For others, it's knowing exactly when it's worth it. Both are valid. Both are progress.

## 17 My Current Favorites

· SECTION

*The always-updated shelf.*

I keep my live, ongoing list of favorite gluten-free brands, snacks, breads, baking mixes, and travel essentials on my ShopMy shelf. I update it as I find new things and retire what I'm no longer reaching for, so this is the best place to see what I'm actually buying right now.

If a brand isn't on the shelf, it doesn't have my current vote.

Browse the live shelf:

[shopmy.us/shop/designergenes](https://shopmy.us/shop/designergenes)

# 18 If You've Tried This Before

· SECTION

*"But I've done this. It didn't work."*

If you've cut gluten in the past and didn't feel a meaningful difference, two things were almost always going on:

## **1. YOU DIDN'T ACCOUNT FOR THE OTHER TRIGGER POINTS.**

Cutting bread is one piece. If you were still hitting heavy soy sauce, processed meats, oats, fermented condiments, or daily collagen and bone broth, your free glutamate load stayed high — and so did the symptoms. Going GF without the Tier 2 work is like fixing a leaky faucet while the pipe is still burst behind the wall.

## **2. YOU DIDN'T PAIR IT WITH GUT WORK.**

Removing a trigger only stops the damage. A compromised gut lining doesn't heal from what you stop eating alone — the rebuild is its own protocol, with its own supports, and sometimes its own testing.

*If either of these sounds like your last attempt, going gluten-free probably IS part of your answer. You just haven't run it with the full picture yet.*

*Try again — this time with backup.*

# 19 What This Connects To

· SECTION

*This is just the beginning.*

This guide is the start of the conversation, not the whole thing.

If you're here because gluten was flagged on your DNA report or you suspect glutamate is a player in your symptoms, the next step is figuring out which SNPs are actually running the show — that's Body by Design®, my flagship genomics-led program where we decode your full panel and build a protocol around what your DNA actually wants.

For deeper metabolic and microbiome work, there are next-step protocols that pair with this guide. Going gluten-free removes the trigger. The work that follows rebuilds the foundation underneath.

*Start here. Feel the difference. When you're ready for what comes next, you'll know.*

*You're not going on a diet.*

*You're un-flooding a nervous system that's been  
overworking for years and finally giving it the break  
it's been asking for.*

*Welcome to feeling like yourself again.*

WITH LOVE,

*Lindsey*

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