WHEAT BELLY - WEIGHT GAIN AND WHEAT

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The wheat that we eat today is not the wheat that our ancestors ate. Wheat belly has been a topic in current books and articles. Some research is pointing to the fact that eating wheat may cause weight gain and food intolerances. It is also interesting to note that many people have more weight gain around their bellies than in other places on the body. This is especially noticeable in middle aged women and men. Some questions come to my mind as I explore this idea:

1. Can a person gain or retain weight by eating too much wheat?
2. Is wheat so genetically modified these days that it contributes to weight gain and disease?
3. What about other grains? Are they safe to eat?
4. What should a person eat if they want to lose weight or maintain a low weight?

Surprisingly, and based on the reading that I've done lately, I think the answer to question number one is yes. Wheat can cause a person to gain weight or maintain an unhealthy weight. Now, what constitutes wheat? Wheat flour(dark or white), barley, and rye all contain gluten and gluten contains a protein called gliadin. Gliadin is very hard to digest for some and nearly impossible to digest for others. These gluten filled flours are found in bread, pasta, virtually every snack, fillers, and more. Wheat, as an ingredient, is found in almost every processed food, unless the food is marked "gluten free, " and there are times I'd question even gluten-free labels, but that's a debate for another time.

So, gluten-containing grains are hard to digest and current wisdom says they may cause Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), Chron’s Disease, Celiac Disease, and more. The other issue here is that people who think they are eating darker colored bread to benefit their health, may in fact, be fooled by marketing techniques. These breads are not what you may think!

According to Wikopedia, “"Wheat flour (as opposed to whole-grain wheat flour or whole-wheat flour) as the first ingredient is not a clear indicator of the product's whole-grain content. If two ingredients are listed as grain products but only the second is listed as whole grain, the entire product may contain between 1% and 49% whole grain. Many breads are colored brown (often with molasses or caramel color) and made to look like whole grain when they are not. In addition, some food manufacturers make foods with whole-grain ingredients, but, because whole-grain ingredients are not the dominant ingredient, they are not whole-grain products. Contrary to popular belief, fiber is not indicative of whole grains. The amount of fiber varies from grain to grain, and some products may have things like bran, peas, or other foods added to boost the fiber content.”1

So wheat as we know it, and as it is listed on ingredient lists, is not always a whole grain. Hmmm. That makes me want to know more. Wikopedia continues, “In Canada, it is legal to advertise any food product as "whole wheat" with up to 70% of the germ removed. While the resulting product will contain the benefit of fiber in the nutritional information, it lacks the more recently discovered health benefits of antioxidants found in the wheat germ. Canadian consumers can be assured of whole-grain products by a label stating 100% whole-grain whole wheat.”

So when you see wheat on the label and assume this whole grain is good for you, it may very well not be! Something with wheat as an ingredient may really be white flour colored with molasses. This is not a good thing for dieters or those who strive to eat more whole grains. The quest to eat whole grains, at least in the U.S. may lead people to eat many fillers and sugars which would essentially contribute to weight gain.

If wheat is hard for you to digest (and if you retain fat around your middle, you should at least ponder this question), the wheat itself may be behind your inability to lose weight. If you’ve tried diet after diet and can’t seem to lose weight, it might be worth cutting wheat out of your diet.

The second question that I pose has to do with genetically modifying food ingredients and wheat is another one of those things that has been genetically modified to death! In an effort to grow more wheat at a faster pace, the actual chemical make up of wheat looks very different to that whole grain that is cut in the field.

In his book, **Wheat Belly**, Dr. William Davis attributes the eating of wheat to many illnesses. The major conclusion that he draws in the book is that wheat may be the single, largest contributor to obesity in our country! Wheat, as he describes it, has been genetically modified so much that it's unhealthy to eat. He and other experts are saying that people should become wheat free. I'm sure more research will be forthcoming in the near future. It will be interesting to see what happens with this debate.

Wheat products, like bread and pasta, are high in carbohydrates. Carbohydrates turn to sugar more quickly than other foods when they hit the bloodstream. This is why those with diabetes have to count carbs and then take insulin to at a predetermined ratio to digest those carbs effectively. We all know that sugars (not just pure sugar but foods that convert quickly to sugars, or in other words, carbs, equal weight gain. (And, they can also equal diabetes and other ailments.) Wheat is also hard to digest, especially our genetically modified wheat which contains a higher gluten content than the wheat of our ancestors.

Wheat, namely gluten, is hard for your body to digest. Foods that are hard to digest often clog the digestive and circulatory systems. Some ways you will see this is in the larger bellies on people. Food that is not being digested effectively will make digestion sluggish and can result in weight gain. As circulation is sluggish as well, disease, namely heart disease can set in. So, not only is weight gain an issue but other body systems will be adversely affected.

What about other grains? There are grains that do not contain gluten. (I have to make a disclaimer here that new research is pointing to the fact that all grains may be hard for some to digest. The verdict is not in or not even nearly in on this thinking yet.) Rice, quinoa, buckwheat, coconut, sorghum, and some others are easier to digest grains or flours. These grains, too, will convert to sugars more quickly in the system. They will probably not slow digestion as much as wheat though. For some, it may be okay to eat some grains but when considering weight loss, grains are certainly not going to be your friend – not any grains.

What should a person eat if they want to lose weight? In a perfect world, the best things to eat would be those that nourish your body. From what I have learned in my quest to learn more about food and eat a healthier diet, these are the tips to consider when wanting to eat healthy and yes, lose weight:
1. Eat ample protein – Meats, nuts, seeds and eggs are high protein foods. When you eat them, choose organic meats and sprouted, whole, organic nuts and seeds. Buy your eggs from a local farmer who believes in raising chickens organically and on a free range basis.
2. Limit grains – If you are intolerant to gluten, you may suffer bloating after eating, a large waistline, tiredness in the afternoons, body aches, high cholesterol, heart disease and more. Consider taking gluten containing grains – yes, wheat, completely out of your diet.
3. Drink water – The rule of thumb for water drinking is to drink the number of ounces daily that equal half your weight. I weigh 120 pounds so I try to drink 60 ounces of water daily.
4. Eat foods high in probiotics – You can buy probiotic supplements but these are really quite limited in the true probiotics. Make your own kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi and more. Eat or drink homemade probiotics daily, preferably more than once a day.
5. Eat your vegetables – Again, choose organic vegetables or grow your own. Many vegetables that you buy at the grocery store are sprayed with pesticides. Choosing organic labels will help you avoid these toxins. Eat many serving of vegetables daily. The fresher the vegetables, the more vitamins you'll add to your body.
6. Listen to your body – Your body will talk to you. If your body hurts, there is a reason why. Start to pay attention to your aches and pains, headaches, stomach upset. Is there a pattern? Be sure to limit foods that cause you distress.
7. Don't eat out – Eating out is a great way to gain weight. Restaurants want their food to taste good. They will not limit additives, fats, or anything bad and sacrifice taste. The meat you get in

an average restaurant is full of growth hormones, additives, and possibly even glue with flavorings! Just say NO. If you have to eat out, choose a fresh salad.
8. Eat good fats – Your body needs fat to survive. It doesn't need unhealthy fat. If you are hungry and eat to fill that need, you will need to make sure your intake of good fats is sufficient on a daily basis. If you don't take care of your cravings, you will eat the wrong things and gain weight. Good fats include nuts and seeds, raw dairy butter, expeller pressed olive and coconut oils, avacado, organic eggs and more.
9. Limit fruits and fruit juices – Fruit is full of natural sugar. This is still sugar. It is okay to eat raw, real, organic fruit. Just don't overdo it.
10. Exercise moderately – Some exercise is good. There is no real need to run 25 miles a day or do anything overly strenuous. A nice, 20 to 30 minute walk daily is a good habit to form. Or, dance or do yoga. Incorporate some exercise into your day.

Feeling good and losing weight are two things that are within everyone's grasp. Diets will come and diets will go. The best bet to deal with weight and health issues is to build good habits. Think of eating as an exercise in nourishing your body. If you lift a piece of food to your mouth and it is not a nourishing food, put it down! Don't eat it. And, ponder the idea of Wheat Belly. It makes sense to me that all of the big bellies you see walking aournd town might slim down if the person removed wheat from his or her diet! Of course, with the removal of wheat must also be the removal of bad fats and an overdose of sugar. It's within your power to make the right food choices. Do it for a healthier you!

This post is part of Fight Back Friday, Monday Mania, and Real Food Wednesday.

Sources:

Photo 1 - Ron Mahon photos, https://picasaweb.google.com/lh/view?q=fat+belly&uname=113573561764834974931&psc=G&filter=1&imglic=creative_commons#5083707241296071858

1 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wheat_flour