

APRIL 2011

# Good Housekeeping

The Dr. Oz Plan

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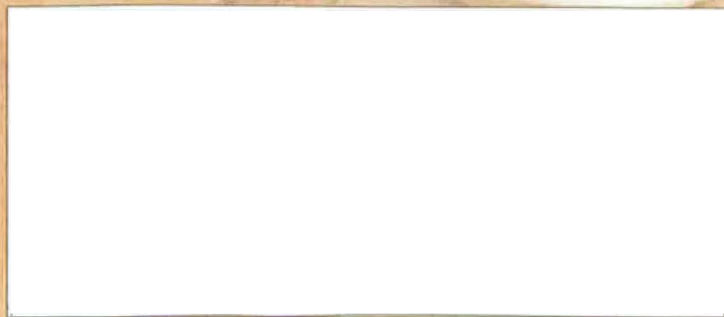
+ Fun ideas for sweet crafts

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MAKEOVERS

Plus The freebie to avoid

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AGING YOU?

Get more shine  
and less frizz





# Should You Try a Gluten-Free DIET?

It may be the trend du jour. But it can also hurt your health—and waistline

**Gwyneth Paltrow has done it** as part of her famous cleanses. *The View*'s Elisabeth Hasselbeck touts its benefits, too. And thousands of other women have hopped on this latest dietary bandwagon, which calls for avoiding all products that contain gluten—a protein found in wheat, barley, and rye. Between 2006 and 2010, the sale of gluten-free foods in supermarkets rose 54 percent. But are gluten shunners really helping their health? Here, the lowdown.

## **GLUTEN-FREE? Definitely: You've seen a doctor and tested positive for celiac disease**

For those who have this serious condition, avoiding gluten is anything but a fad: Eating even the tiniest amount sets off an autoimmune response that causes damage to the lining of the small intestine, explains Tricia Thompson, M.S., R.D., author of *The Gluten-Free Nutrition Guide*. That damage can lead to nutrient deficiencies and cause a range of mysterious-seeming symptoms, including diarrhea, skin rash, and depression, as well as long-term risk of intestinal cancer. Diagnosis is confirmed by analyzing tissue samples from your GI tract. Currently, a strict gluten-free diet is the only treatment, but—the good news—sticking to the diet reverses the damage, your symptoms, and the risks.

## **GLUTEN-FREE? Possibly: You have celiac-like symptoms, but no diagnosis**

Many people with ongoing gastrointestinal upset, as well as such seemingly unrelated problems as chronic fatigue syndrome and joint pain, find relief after adopting a gluten-free diet. They may have a “gluten sensitivity”—a disorder associated with a wide range of maladies but not with the same intestinal damage as celiac disease. But don't just put yourself on a gluten-free diet, warns Alessio Fasano, M.D., director of the Center for Celiac Research, University of Maryland School of Medicine. In order to avoid serious problems, “work with your doctor

to rule out celiac first, then try a test run.” If a gluten-free plan seems to help, consult a nutritionist to develop a sound diet.

## **GLUTEN-FREE? Probably not: You want to lose weight**

You've heard it before: It's total calories, not gluten or carbohydrates, that cause you to put on or take off pounds. In fact, gluten-free versions of foods are frequently *higher* in calories than their regular counterparts; a gluten-free English muffin from Foods by George has 210 calories, for example, compared with just 120 calories for a Thomas' Original English muffin. And gluten-free food products tend to be low in fiber, which helps fill you up. One thing that *will* get thin on such a diet: your wallet. These specialty items can cost more than twice as much as wheat-containing versions.

—Rachel Meltzer Warren, M.S., R.D.

