

Gluten-Free Flour-Free Plan

[The Complete Idiot's Guide to Flour-Free Eating](#)

By Ann Parkinson

Whole foods are so often considered to be the rudiments of a healthy diet, but most people look the other way when it comes to flour products. Whole grain flour products are assumed to be every bit as healthful as their unprocessed whole kernel counterparts. Moreover, so many gluten-free recipes are dependent upon whole gluten-free grain flours which are incorporated into the diet without question. Keith Wayne Berkowitz, M.D., feels quite differently about the nutritional properties of any flour products. As co-author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Flour-Eating*, he has a lot to say about flour products and their presence as a dietary staple in American society.

About Keith Wayne Berkowitz, M.D.

Keith Wayne Berkowitz, M.D. (New York, NY) is the founder and medical director of the Center for Balanced Health. Prior to starting the Center for Balanced Health, he was the medical director of the Atkins Center for Complementary Medicine. Prior to this, Berkowitz spent five years as a faculty member in the Department of Medicine at North Shore University Hospital, Manhasset, New York. In this capacity, he was responsible for patient care, as well as supervising and teaching medical students as a clinical instructor at New York University School of Medicine. He is currently on the Scientific Advisory Board for the National Foundation for Celiac Awareness. He is the co-author of *The Princeton Review Medical School Companion* (Random House, 1996) and *The Stubborn Fat Fix* (Rodale, 2009). Berkowitz graduated from Columbia University Business School, in New York City, where he received an MBA. He is a frequent contributor to *Men's Health Magazine*. He has been interviewed by *Newsweek*, *New York Magazine*, *Newsday*, *The Sunday London Times*, Associated Press, CNN, *INC Magazine*, amNY, Wins 1010 online, and The New York Post. Additionally, he has been featured on ABC News, WOR Radio, WCBS Radio, and RAI TV.

A Gluten-Free Flour Free Plan: Interview with Keith Berkowitz, M.D.

The Scoop on Flour

LovetoKnow (LTK): Since flour is pretty much a staple component of conventional cooking, are there any benefits (in terms of health) to eliminating this ingredient?

Keith Berkowitz (KB): White and wheat flours are refined products that offer very little in terms of vitamins, nutrients, and/or minerals. They are complex carbohydrates and therefore are made up of simple glucose units and thereby can increase in your blood glucose level. An elevated blood glucose level stimulates the pancreas to secrete insulin. An elevated insulin level is the underlying factor in many health problems, including obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, and cancer. The key to preventing these health conditions is keeping blood glucose levels stable and insulin levels low.

LTK: Many people regard whole grain wheat flour as a whole food product. However, flour is still a processed food. Is there a difference in the way the body responds to whole grain wheat flour as opposed to the unprocessed wheat? Are any nutrients or important elements in the wheat damaged during processing?

KB: When wheat is processed the bran and the germ is removed and all that remains is the endosperm which is the carbohydrate rich part. When this happens the flour loses many of its nutrients including a substantial amount of the [B vitamins](#), Vitamin E, protein and fiber as well as other key nutrients. To ensure you benefit from these key nutrients it is important to use foods that are either made from 100% whole grains and/or are made from wheat berries, the whole unprocessed wheat kernel.

A Safe Bet for Celiacs?

LTK: Many celiacs experience multiple food sensitivities. In fact, some celiacs cannot tolerate any grains at all, even the gluten-free varieties. Could a flour-free diet somehow benefit the gluten-intolerant community or do the bulk of flour-free recipes still utilize grains as a fundamental?

KB: Yes a flour-free diet can benefit celiacs since most of our recipes do not use grains. Many of the recipes use foods such as ground coconut, almond meal, chia seeds, flaxseed meal, ground fava beans, ground hazelnuts, ground garbanzo beans and sorghum as alternative ingredients to grains.

LTK: When it comes to baking, flour is pretty much the base of the product. What sorts of foods mimic this effect in the flour-free versions?

KB: The "flour-free" plan uses alternative ingredients such as almond meal, ground coconut, chia seeds, konjac noodles, amaranth, quinoa, flaxseed meal, ground fava beans, ground hazelnuts, ground garbanzo beans, sorghum, steel-cut oats, soba noodles, stone-ground cornmeal and brown rice meal. The advantage of these flour substitutes is that they are more nutrient rich and better sources of fiber, protein and fat.

LTK: Flour products can be very filling, particularly pastas and baked goods. Many individuals who switch to raw and whole food-based diets find themselves needing to ingest greater amounts of food in order to achieve satisfaction. Will consuming a flour-free diet affect an individual's ability to feel full after meals?

KB: No, in fact, individuals consuming a flour-free diet may "feel full" while consuming fewer calories. Our flour alternatives have greater amounts of fiber, protein and fat which have been shown to be advantageous in controlling blood glucose levels. The more stable the blood glucose level the less hunger an individual experiences thereby leading to increased satiety.

Making the Transition

LTK: Lastly, for individuals who are serious about avoiding flour products in their diet, what sort of problems and hidden sources of flour will they encounter when dining out? And will this lifestyle pose serious complications for the average diner?

KB: The greatest danger is found in foods that are breaded or served with a sauce or dressing. Many sauces and dressings use flour as a thickener or a base. You can avoid this danger, by passing on breaded dishes and by asking that your meal be served without the sauce or dressing. In addition, individuals will, on most menus, be able to choose an option or be able to simply modify an option that allows them to still enjoy their meal and at the same time comply with their "flour-free" lifestyle.

Further information

For more information on how to healthily transition into a flour-free eating plan, you can purchase a copy of [The Complete Idiots Guide to Flour-Free Eating](#) on Amazon.com. Though a gluten-free flour-free eating plan can seem theoretically restrictive, your newfound dependence on whole foods will naturally eliminate flour and all sorts of processed foods from your diet, replacing these items with fresh revitalizing foods. A gluten-free diet that offers high nutrient levels and low toxins is absolutely imperative to any healing regime.