



## *The Gluten-Free Effect on Athletes: Improving Performance Through Diet*

### **Top 3 Concerns: Athletes, Celiac Disease & the Gluten-Free Diet Q&A with Erin Elberson, PT**

**QUESTION:** Can you give some recommendations for children as well as adults?

**ANSWER:** Kids should eat the same things as adults -- healthy, whole, naturally gluten-free food. There is nothing wrong with an occasional treat, but the idea that kids have to eat differently isn't necessary.

**QUESTION:** What is the best way to try and help my son gain weight (he's playing rugby) without loading him with too many carbs and sweets?

**ANSWER:** Lots of whole nutrient and calorie dense food! Calorie dense=nuts and nut butters, whole milk, coconut milk and oil. And protein powders if needed.

**QUESTION:** How much protein should I be getting in my normal diet (female, 32 years old) for a pescetarian who exercises regularly?

**ANSWER:** Protein .75 to 2 grams per pound of bodyweight dependent on activity and total calorie level. Weight training athletes generally need a gram per pound at least. As calories increase, protein needs decrease. If you are dieting and taking in calories below maintenance levels, higher protein levels help with feeling full and also for muscle retention. We are talking about OPTIMAL health and performance, not bare minimum for survival.

**QUESTION:** What is a good nutritional protein bar that is gluten free that isn't full of calories and sugar but a lot of protein?

**Answer:** Three possibilities include Quest, Zing, or Think Thin bars. Or you could make your own!

**QUESTION:** I exercise to lose weight and even though the gluten-free diet is healthier for me, there is, more often than not, more calories in gluten free products. However, if I skip having some sort of carbohydrate (gluten-free bread, gluten-free pasta, etc.) then I am left feeling hungry and shaky. Is this a common occurrence for gluten-free dieters?

**ANSWER:** Yes, it can be, but it is very individual. Try slower digesting carbohydrate such as a potato or sweet potato and/or combine with a fat, or more overall fat and protein in your diet. Could be calorie levels, if you take the gluten carb out and do not replace it with something else, you are getting less overall calories. Keep in mind that effective weight loss strategies combine reduced calories with exercise. Smart nutrition + smart training + consistency + time=success in fat loss.