Gluten-Free Eaters Have Higher Levels of Arsenic and Mercury

The number of people with celiac disease or gluten sensitivity is on the rise. When they eliminate wheat and other gluten containing grains from their diet, they usually significantly increase their consumption of rice. Unfortunately, as it is growing, rice soaks up heavy metals like arsenic, mercury, and cadmium from the soil and water. According to a new study, researchers found those who have been on a long-term, gluten-free diet have double the amount of arsenic in their systems and 70% more mercury than their gluten eating counterparts.

The Metal Sponge

Why does rice suck up arsenic and other heavy metals? Rice is flooded while it's growing, in part to keep weeds in check and to discourage pests. Water enables the rice's root system to draw in more nutrients from the soil. As it draws up nutrients, it also sucks up other things in the soil, like mercury, cadmium, arsenic, and tungsten.

Most of the rice in the U.S. is grown in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Texas, and California on farmland that was formerly used to grow cotton. Arsenic-based pesticides were used on much of the land to combat boll weevils. Combine those specific pesticides with rice's extraction abilities, and high levels of heavy metals are the result.

What to Look For in Rice

This does not mean a gluten-free diet dooms you to heavy metal poisoning. With some smart planning and healthy choices, a

gluten-free diet can leave you feeling great.

Not all rice is created equal. Though organic rice still has arsenic in it, it’s the best choice to avoid excessive pesticides on top of the metals naturally found in the rice. Brown rice has higher levels of arsenic than white rice. The hull or bran of the rice that gives brown rice its’ higher levels of magnesium, fiber, zinc, and folate also stores arsenic. Of the places where rice is grown, Basmati rice that is grown in California, India, and Pakistan contains less inorganic arsenic.

Variety is the Spice of Life

Another answer to the rice problem? Eat less rice and a greater variety of gluten-free grains. Rotating rice with grains like quinoa or millet will both decrease arsenic exposure and increase your body’s exposure to another nutritional profile. The same rotation can be applied to alternate flours. If you chose processed or pre-made foods, look for ones with alternative flours like chickpea or coconut. Switching up the type of flour you use at home can also limit your arsenic intake.

Get Them Out!

There are also foods that pull heavy metals from the body. Garlic, onions, and cilantro all help detox heavy metals and add extra flavor to food. Other edibles like chlorella, spirulina, and activated charcoal are also great at attracting heavy metals and helping the body process them out. Learn about Diatomaceous Earth, Total Nutrition, and read *Top 5 Foods that Detox Heavy Metals and Toxins – With Protocol.*

A Healthy Diet is The Best Defense

Someone on a gluten-free diet is more likely to eat rice and foods made with rice flour. The trade-off for this is higher levels of arsenic and mercury. This doesn't negate the benefits of a gluten-free diet. It can even be seen as a motivation to incorporate new foods and grains into your diet. And check out *How To Reduce the Arsenic in Your Rice by 80%.*

Related Reading:

- *Is Wheat Poison? What's Behind the Rise of Celiac Disease and Gluten Intolerance*
- *Mercury Fillings, Root Canals, Cavitations – What You Need to Know*
- *Dangerously High Arsenic Levels Found in Rice*
- *Still Have Candida? How Mercury Fillings Cause Candida Overgrowth*

Sources:

- *Think Your Gluten-free Diet is Healthy? You're Exposed to Twice as Much Arsenic and Mercury, Study Finds* – Daily Mail
- *The Trouble With Rice* – New York Times
- *There's Arsenic in Your Rice – and Here's How it Got There* – Grist.org
- *How Much Arsenic Is In Your Rice?* – Consumer Reports
- *Top 5 Foods That Detox Heavy Metals and Toxins – With Protocol* – Organic Lifestyle Magazine
- *Plant-based Cooking Demos by Dr. Vanita Rahman – Lentils with Brown Rice (Image credit)*