

Ask Leyla: To eat bread or not to eat bread? That is the question.



Q: I'm still unsure about whether I should eat regular bread. I don't have a gluten problem. Can I just eat bread when I feel like indulging?

A: The simple answer would be you can eat bread if you don't have a gluten intolerance or allergy to wheat or yeast. But here are some questions you should ask yourself to determine if bread can be a regular part of your diet, or just an occasional indulgence:

First, are you overweight? Grains have the most carbohydrates of all the food groups and bread is a definite insulin trigger. Insulin, as you know, is a fat storage hormone.

Is bread a trigger for overindulgence? If eating a slice of bread induces more cravings for it or other starchy, processed foods, pay attention. For example, have you ever tried eating just one potato chip, or pretzel? Oftentimes, eating just one is the gateway to wanting more.

Do you have metabolic syndrome, prediabetes or diabetes? Then you must control the amount of carbohydrates in your diet. Eating commercial breads regularly can derail your efforts. Keep in mind that very healthful diets like the Paleo diet and Whole 30 don't contain any grains, effectively keeping bread off the list.

Do you have high triglycerides or fatty liver? Frequent bread consumption adds up to too many carbs that can drive up triglycerides—which I believe is a more important risk factor for cardiovascular disease than cholesterol. Moreover, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease is reaching epidemic proportions in our country due to high carb diets and obesity.

If you can't answer these questions on your own, a qualified nutritionist can help you. Then you can assess if and/or how much bread you can eat.

To your health!

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