

Dr Rodney Ford, a gastroenterologist and food allergy specialist, discusses on *Daily Bread: Can Any Human Body Handle Gluten?* at TEDxTauranga. Below is the full transcript.

MP3 Audio:

<https://singjupost.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Daily-bread-can-any-human-body-handle-gluten-by-Dr.-Rodney-Ford-at-TEDxTauranga.mp3>

YouTube Video:

Dr Rodney Ford - Gastroenterologist and food allergy specialist

Risk. Did you know that everyday you eat your bread, you are taking a risk? Risk is a strange association to give with this grain of wheat. But in wheat, half of the protein is gluten.

Gluten. This is my model of gluten. I stole it from the toy box in my clinic. And gluten is a very interesting molecule. We didn't know that it was so harmful - until now. When I was a baby, my mum and dad had no idea that gluten might harm me, or them, or anyone in our family.

This was 1950, when I was a baby, at the same time that Professor Wilhelm Dickie was looking after his patients in Holland. And he noticed and he heard from the mothers of his patients that wheat probably was causing these children harm. And he was the first person in the world to establish that gluten was the cause of what he said is *celiac disease*.

Celiac disease is a condition where the gluten damages your bowel. When I was in med school, celiac disease was one paragraph in a 2,000-page book. Now, whole books are written about it.

This is me at 10. I reckon my mum did a good job nourishing me despite her lack of knowledge about gluten and any other of the fun intricacies of micronutrients. They were very proud of me, a couple of decades later, when I got my MD a doctorate in Food Allergy because I had been very interested in how foods can make you sick.

This is the classical picture of a celiac child. You can see his big tummy, his thin arms and legs. He feels miserable. He's in pain most days, he's not growing. He's got diarrhea, he's probably got reflux. He's stunted. No one knew what to do with him until Professor Dickie showed it was gluten that was the problem.

In 1960, there was the development of what's called the small bowel biopsy where you could put a tube right down into the intestines, snag a piece of tissue, pull it up and have a look and see. That tissue was damaged by the celiac disease, it was called villous atrophy. And celiac disease became a gastrointestinal illness. Of course, if you've got gut troubles, and you're eating the food that's causing the trouble, then it must be a gut problem. So the gastroenterologists hijacked the disease.

I'd like to introduce you to another child. This is Elizabeth. She's given me her permission to show her in the bath. She wasn't expecting to have this photo shown in Tauranga today. But I didn't meet Elizabeth in the bath, I met her when she was 6. She came to my clinic, not in a ballet tutu. But looking like this, thin, miserable, she was in abdominal pain, she was refluxing, not growing, her mother was desperate. Desperate to find an answer for the child. Because she was nourishing her child just like my mother was nourishing me, but now she wasn't growing.

I was in a quandary because I was a junior consultant at Christchurch Hospital running my gastroenterology clinic. But Elizabeth had already been seen by two other professors. They had both declared she had celiac disease, had both done the [fishing] test, bringing the tube down the stomach, pulling out a piece of tissue, and it was negative. They declared she did not have celiac disease.

But Elizabeth was lucky. She came to my clinic and I had an interest in food allergy. And the second reason she was lucky is because of this. The hospital I was at put a brand new test in called the anti-gliadin antibody test. This was brand new and I had the opportunity to do this, I had already done this in England, in another clinic. And the beauty about this; gluten, when you eat it, doesn't get digested. It can get through into your blood and the immune system hates it. It's the enemy. It makes antibody against it, and the antibody's job is to click onto gluten and get rid of it.

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We measured this antibody in Elizabeth, and their length was very high indeed. So I went to my colleagues and said, *"Look, I know what's wrong with Elizabeth, after all this time she doesn't have celiac disease. Gluten is making her sick, I've got to put her on a gluten-free diet."* Yep, that's what they said, nothing. They weren't astonished, they said, *"Rodney, only children with celiac disease were on a gluten-free diet."*

But I went back to Elizabeth's mum, and we had a chat. That month, the next month, the next month, and after 9 months of chatting I had the courage to put her on a gluten-free diet. And she came back to my clinic the month after that and said, *"Dr. Ford, it's a miracle. She's got better."*

I wrote in the notes, *"At last, we are getting somewhere."*

This is Elizabeth at 8. This is Elizabeth at 10. She's nowhere like the child we saw earlier on. And I thought she must have a gluten illness which isn't

celiac disease. I thought, going back in my clinic, how many other children had this problem? I hadn't picked up on it, even if I was a food allergist.

So I began to do the tests. On every child that came to my clinic. And I presented these beautiful children who had negative endoscopy tests, had positive antibodies to gluten, to a medical conference. And it was met with skepticism. I thought, there aren't enough children.

So I did 100 children next. The endoscopy and blood tests. I presented this to a North American meeting called NETSCAN. There was skepticism. I thought well there's not enough children. I now presented, the next year, 1,000 children that have come through my clinic. 80% would look better on a gluten-free diet, none with celiac disease. This is the answer. *"Dr. Ford, the only children who were on a gluten-free diet are celiacs."*

There were blind randomized controlled trials, well these kids got better. They were sick before. We were just changing their food, we weren't giving them a drug, we're taking them off drugs, what else do you need? I thought I know the problem, it doesn't have a name. So I coined the term *'the Gluten Syndrome'*. I sent books all over the world, said, *"Look at this!"* and was met with skepticism. I did more research, and it turned out that other people in the world were similarly irritated like me. They had shown that gluten affects the nerves. And I came up with the idea that most of the symptoms from gluten were actually nerve damage.

And then, other people began writing books and last year, these three books came out. *"Toxic staple"*, *"Wheat belly"*, and *"Grain brain"*, all showing that wheat and gluten harm everybody. And then to cap it off, Professor Fasano, he showed in his book, *"Gluten-related disorders"*, that around 10% of people in North America were suffering from a gluten-related disorder. Fasano, he's not just an also — he runs and is director of the Celiac Disease Research Center in Boston, Massachusetts. And this

book isn't written just by him, but by 15 other coworkers internationally. I was overjoyed that these people were coming to the gluten-free party.

But it's a lot worse than this. Most of the people in this room are not on a gluten-free diet. I know from Sheldon that 40 people requested gluten-free food. It's hidden in the right hand back. I went there and there was no food left, it's hard to get there.

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Next TEDxTauranga, they're going to have all gluten-free food except for a gluten corner. Because nobody can digest this stuff. Catherine Tilley got celiac disease whilst was working in a bakery, in a big flour mill, and she did some research showing that nobody can digest gluten. Gluten cannot be pulled apart in your body. Most proteins can be easily pulled apart in their individual component amino-acids, and reform in your body as human protein. We just poop this out, nobody can digest it. A waste of chewing.

The next thing that Alessio Fasano showed is that everybody who eats gluten gets an inflammatory reaction in their gut due to zonulin which is a chemical, a substance that makes your gut leaky, everybody in this room. A professor in Spain, she wrote this article and she classed gluten as an anti-nutrient, that it's worse than eating food, it's a negative effect eating this. She showed that there are other proteins in wheat that are equally as harmful. Gluten is just one of the many toxic molecules in wheat.

And worst of all, Marius Hadjivassiliou has shown that this gluten, the gluten antibody, the gluten complex, other proteins and other antibody reactions to gluten all affect your brain. That gluten is predominantly a brain disease. And the problem is that if you get the brain damage from gluten you may not recover. It's been shown that gluten can trigger

autoimmune disease, other food intolerances, many, many illnesses, and probably everybody is best off gluten.

You don't know what you're eating when you eat a loaf of bread. It's been advertised that a dollar is a loaf today. That's a gluten nightmare. What are you going to do for your children? What are you going to do for yourself? My mum and dad are dead now. I think that they were gluten intolerant, my mum was thin, she had bowel disease, she had a bit of arthritis, she fatigued, she had Alzheimer's. Dad had arthritis, dad had eczema, he was a bit cranky. And he developed later on dementia.

What about me? I've decided to be gluten zero, that's the term I've developed over the last 10 years, I'm not going to risk this. I got an email yesterday from Keith, a friend of mine, he's a Professor of Agriculture. He said. *"Rodney, nobody talked about gluten. Well, when you were talking to me, I thought that gluten was for other people, or gluten-free. Not now, I've been gluten free for the last year, I've lost my arthritis for 20 years, I've lost my gut problems which I've had for 20 years, gluten free is for me."*

What about you? Are you willing to risk it? Do you smoke? Are you willing to risk the damage of smoking? Do you drive a car? Yes. You wear a seatbelt and you have airbags, you take the risk precautions. Are you risking eating wheat, are you risking giving it to your family? I had a talk to an acquaintance up here, he's a celiac, his parents are celiacs, he's got celiacs in his family and they are the problem, family. The relatives don't like to come because it's awkward, it's embarrassing going to the gluten restaurant asking for gluten free. The chefs don't like it, the waiting staff don't like it.

But in 10 years hence, the majority of people in New Zealand won't be taking the risk, they will not accept gluten, we are going to have a gluten free nation just as we're going to have a smoke free nation. I'd advise you:



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do not take the risk.

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