

STATE & LOCAL

LIVING GLUTEN FREE

Jennifer Cash
Staff Writer

What is gluten? Why do stores now advertise gluten-free products? Gluten is the common name for proteins in specific grains that are harmful to persons with celiac disease. These proteins are found in all forms of wheat and related grains such as rye, barley and triticale. Celiac disease is a lifelong digestive disorder. When people with celiac disease eat foods containing gluten, an immune-mediated toxic reaction causes damage to the small intestine and does not allow food to be properly absorbed. Even the smallest bit of gluten can affect those with celiac disease and can cause problems. The celiac disease Website, www.celiac.org, says that villi, tiny hair-like projections in the small intestine, get damaged when gluten is ingested. The damaged villi do not ef-

fectively absorb basic nutrients—proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins and minerals. If celiac disease is left untreated, then damage to the small bowel can be chronic and life threatening. Long-term condi-

According to www.celiac.org, the cause of celiac disease is a mystery and one out of 133 three people in the United States have celiac disease. It is not a food allergy but rather an autoimmune disease.

People can undergo tests for diagnosis of celiac disease. Certain antibody blood tests help identify celiac disease. Celiac disease can appear at any time in a person's life and can be triggered in older age after a person has surgery, a viral infection, severe emotional stress, pregnancy or child-birth. Symptoms that may be a sign of having celiac disease include recurring bloating, gas or abdominal pain, chronic diarrhea or constipation, unexplained weight loss or gain, pale, foul smelling stools, unexplained anemia, bone or joint pain, behavior changes, depression, irritability, vitamin K deficiency, fatigue, weakness or lack of energy, canker sores inside the mouth and tooth

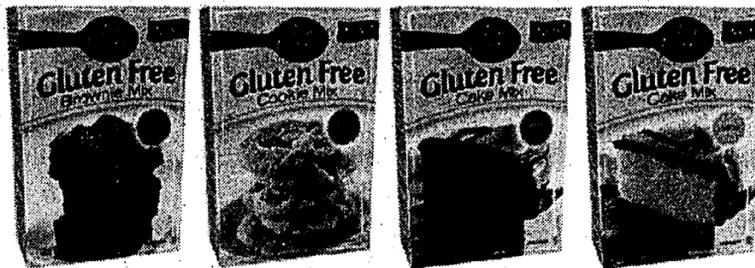


Photo Courtesy: <http://www.bettycrocker.com/products/gluten-free/gluten-free-images.htm>

tions of untreated celiac disease are iron deficiency anemia, early osteoporosis, vitamin and mineral deficiencies, central and peripheral nervous system disorders, pancreatic insufficiency, intestinal lymphomas and other gastrointestinal cancers and gallbladder malfunctions.

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A \$1 TAX INCREASE

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In March 2009, North Carolina Governor Beverly Perdue raised the tax on cigarettes. What used to be a .35 cent cigarette tax was raised to a \$1.35 tax. This recessive tax was put in place in order to help fill the financial deficit that North Carolina is currently battling. It was also put in place in order to help promote a healthier lifestyle.

One of the major complaints with this new tax is, of course, the increase in price. The tax is significantly greater, and it is taking its toll on cigarette smokers across the state. What used to be a \$4.26 purchase has now turned into a 6 dollar purchase. This increase in price has outraged many of North Carolina smokers.

In addition to the expense, many North Carolinians are upset about the tax because North Carolina is a well known tobacco state. Its tobacco fields and companies are known across the country. The tobacco industry is also a very big source of income and provides thousands of jobs to residents across the state. With the new tax of cigarettes, many people are concerned that cigarette smoking could decrease and the tobacco industry would ultimately suffer. If this were the case, many North Carolinians would be out of a job.

However, many people are in favor of this new tax. It is a very good resource for bringing in revenue. When proposing her budget plan to The Legislature, Perdue stated that she was not interested in increasing broad based taxes in order

to help protect her constituents from more economic pressure. However, she was proposing what she called a sin tax on luxury items such as cigarettes and alcohol. She claims that with this new tax, she will be bringing in a decent revenue for the state, without compromising the economic lifestyles of North Carolina residents.

Perdue also mentioned the negative effects of cigarettes and alcohol. Her belief is that these items, in addition to being harmful to the individual who chooses to use them, are a huge burden on the state's health care system. It is Perdue's hope that this tax will help fill the 3.4 billion dollar gap in this year's budget.

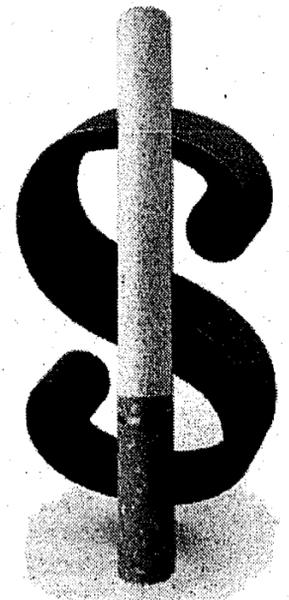


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