



# Medications and the Gluten-Free Diet

Updated January 2019

Staying gluten-free involves more than just dietary changes. Medications must also be evaluated for their gluten content. Many pharmaceuticals have an additional filler called an excipient, used to make a particular dosage form of the drug. These fillers are often made from corn, potato, or tapioca. However, some are derived from wheat or, rarely, barley. If you have doubts about the gluten-free status of a medication, it is important that you consult with your pharmacist and/or check with the manufacturer of the product.

The majority of drug manufacturers do not clearly label their products or packaging with information regarding the gluten content of their drug. Medications – whether prescription or over-the-counter - are not included in the FDA gluten-free labeling regulation which applies to FDA-regulated food products. In late 2017 the FDA issued a draft document on labeling recommendations for medications; as of May 2018 the guidelines were not finalized. If and when such guidelines are finalized, consumers may have easier access to information about the gluten content of medications. (Note that this document will constitute “guidelines” and not “requirements” for gluten labeling.)

## Common Gluten-Free Pharmaceutical Excipients

- Acacia
- Alginate acid
- Alpha tocopherol
- Ascorbic acid
- Benzyl alcohol
- Calcium carbonate
- Carboxymethylcellulose
- Citric acid
- Corn starch
- Croscarmellose sodium
- Dextrose
- Docusate sodium
- Fructose
- Glucose
- Hydrogenated vegetable oil
- Hydroxypropyl cellulose
- Lactose
- Magnesium carbonate
- Magnesium stearate
- Matitol
- Maltose
- Mannitol
- Microcrystalline cellulose
- Polydextrose
- Povidone
- Propylene glycol
- Silicon dioxide
- Simethicone
- Sodium benzoate
- Sodium lauryl sulfate
- Sorbitol
- Stearic acid
- Sucrose
- Vanillin
- Xanthan gum
- Zinc stearate

## Excipients which could be derived from wheat or barley

- Starch
- Pre-gelatinized starch
- Dextrimaltose
- Dextrin
- Dextrates
- Cyclodextrins
- Maltodextrin
- Sodium starch glycolate

### Resources for GF Drug Information:

- [www.glutenfreedrugs.com](http://www.glutenfreedrugs.com) (Pharmacist controlled site)
- [dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/](http://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/)
- [pillbox.nlm.nih.gov/pillimage/search.php](http://pillbox.nlm.nih.gov/pillimage/search.php)

This document may be reproduced for educational purposes only.

Advances in celiac disease are fast-paced. If this document is more than 2 years old, please visit our website for updated documents.

This information should not be used to diagnose or treat gluten-related disorders or other medical conditions. For questions about these conditions consult your healthcare team when considering this information.

Gluten Intolerance Group (GIG) of North America®  
31214 124th Ave. S.E.  
Auburn, WA 98092-3667

Phone: 253-833-6655  
Fax: 253-833-6675

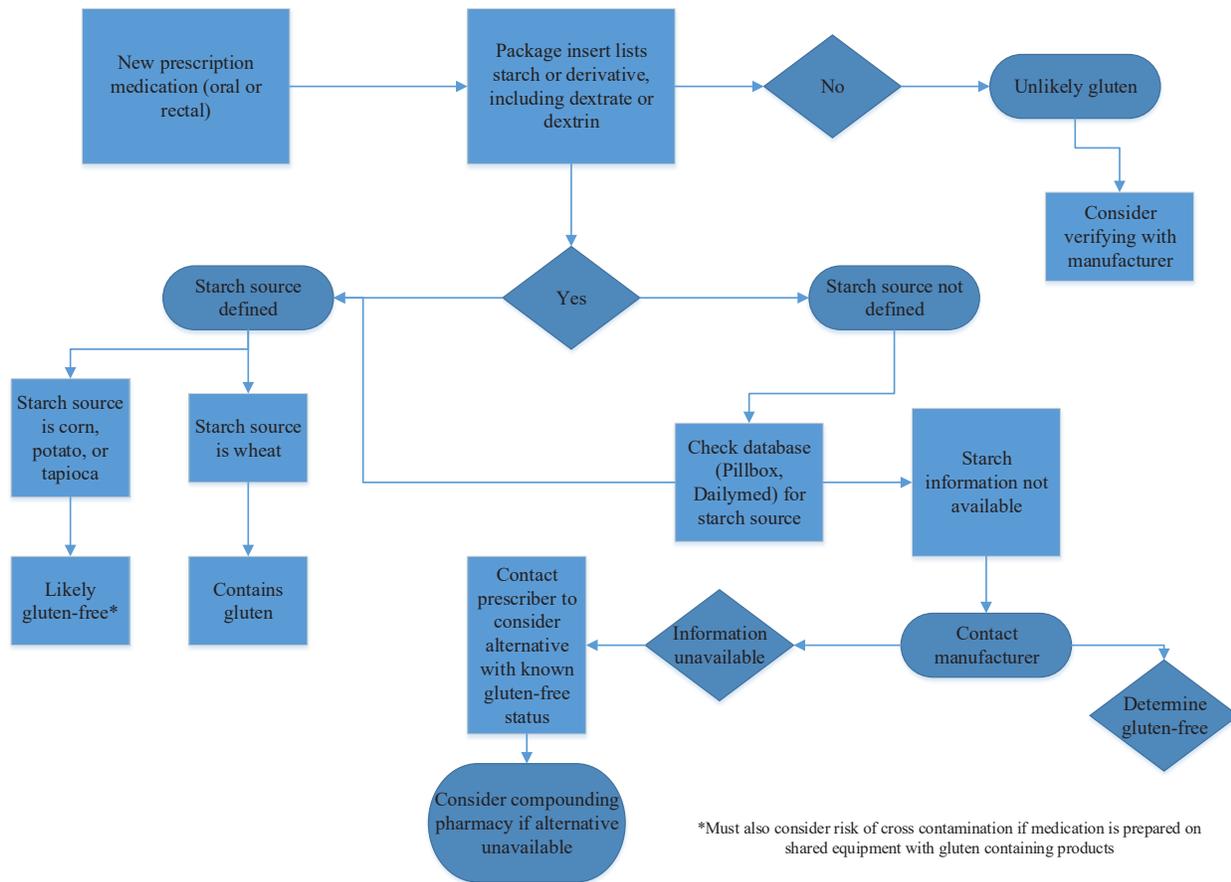
[www.GLUTEN.org](http://www.GLUTEN.org)  
[customerservice@GLUTEN.org](mailto:customerservice@GLUTEN.org)

The Mission of the Gluten Intolerance Group is to empower the gluten-free community through consumer support, advocacy, and education.



The following flow chart was created by a pharmacist to assist in verifying the gluten-free status of medications.

Figure 1. Process for pharmacists to verify gluten-free status of medications



Rubal-Peace, G and Sepp C. Addressing Barriers for Patients with Celiac Disease When Assessing for Gluten in Medications. Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Aug 2018; 118(8):1365-69.