



**GLUTEN
INTOLERANCE
GROUP**



Getting Started on a Gluten-Free Diet

Updated March 2020

The following information is intended to be used as a preliminary guide for those who are newly diagnosed with celiac disease or gluten sensitivity. Not all aspects of the gluten-free diet are as clear cut as portrayed here. For additional details about the gluten-free diet, consult with a knowledgeable dietitian and go to the Resources section of the Gluten Intolerance Group website, www.gluten.org.

Individuals with gluten-related disorders (celiac disease, non-celiac gluten sensitivity, or dermatitis herpetiformis, which is the skin manifestation of celiac disease) must avoid gluten for health reasons. Gluten is the generic name for certain types of proteins found in the common cereal grains wheat, barley, rye and their derivatives. When individuals with celiac disease ingest gluten, an immune response occurs which damages the lining of the small intestine and can lead to symptoms and health problems in virtually all body systems. Even very small amounts of gluten can cause problems, and this is true whether or not obvious symptoms are present. In the case of non-celiac gluten sensitivity (also known as “gluten sensitivity”), it is not believed that damage to the small intestine occurs, but gluten must still be avoided.

- **The following grains and ingredients derived from these gluten-containing grains must be removed from the diet:**
 - **Wheat** - Includes all varieties and forms such as: durum, spelt, semolina, coucous, bulgur, emmer, farina, farro, and einkorn.
 - **Barley**
 - **Rye**
- Choose **naturally gluten-free grains and flours**, including rice, corn, soy, potato, tapioca, beans, sorghum, quinoa, millet, buckwheat, cassava, coconut, arrowroot, amaranth, teff, flax, chia, yucca, and nut flours.

Research indicates that pure, uncontaminated oats consumed in moderation (up to ½ cup dry rolled oats daily) are tolerated by most people with celiac disease. Choose uncontaminated oats that are certified gluten-free, and consult with your physician or dietitian before including oats in the diet.

- Other **naturally gluten-free foods** are fruits & vegetables; fresh meats, poultry & fish; legumes, nuts & seeds, and plain dairy products. These foods in their pure forms are gluten-free. Processed/flavored versions may have gluten-containing ingredients.
- **Gluten-free substitutes** for foods commonly made with wheat are widely available at mainstream and health food stores, direct from gluten-free food manufacturers and from Internet sites.
- Distilled alcoholic beverages, distilled vinegars, and wine may be safely included in the gluten-free diet. Most beers, ales, lagers, and malted beverages are made from gluten-containing grains and are NOT gluten-free. Beers made from gluten-free grains, such as sorghum, are gluten-free.



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Reading Food Labels

An important part of successfully following a gluten-free diet is reading packaged food labels carefully. This includes “gluten-free” claims on packages, as well as product ingredient lists. Since ingredients can change at any time, it’s important to read labels every time you shop.



1. CERTIFIED

A product which carries a 3rd party gluten-free certification such as that of GIG’s Gluten-Free Certification Organization (GFCO), is considered safe for gluten-free consumers. If a product is certified gluten-free, you can stop at this step.



2. LABELED

If a product is not certified gluten-free but bears a “gluten-free” claim (and is regulated by the FDA *) it is considered safe to consume. The FDA gluten-free labeling regulation also applies to products labeled “no gluten,” “free of gluten,” or “without gluten”.



3. INGREDIENTS

For products which are neither certified nor labeled gluten-free, it is essential to read the ingredient list. If any of the following are present on the ingredient list, the product is not gluten-free:

- Wheat ** (including all types of wheat such as spelt)
- Rye
- Barley
- Oats unless certified gluten-free
- Malt
- Brewer’s yeast

*FDA and USDA

The FDA gluten-free labeling regulation is a part of FALCPA (the “Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act”). FALCPA applies to FDA-regulated products only. The FDA regulates the vast majority of packaged foods. The USDA regulates meats, poultry, egg products and mixed products which generally contain more than 3% raw or 2% cooked meat (e.g. some soups and frozen entrees). Products regulated by the USDA are not required to comply with FALCPA, but an estimated 80-90% do so voluntarily.

**Looking for wheat on ingredient labels

FALCPA requires that the top 8 allergens be clearly identified, wheat being one of them. Derivatives of wheat such as “modified food starch” must clearly indicate that “wheat” is the source when this is the case. If there is any doubt about whether a USDA regulated product is complying with FALCPA labeling, the following ingredients may be derived from wheat and need to be avoided or investigated: starch, food starch, modified food starch, dextrin.

**A product that is labeled gluten-free may include the term “wheat” in the ingredient list (e.g. wheat starch) or in a separate “Contains wheat” statement, but the label must also include the following statement: “The wheat has been processed to allow this food to meet the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requirements for gluten-free foods.”

Cross-Contamination in Food Preparation

It is essential when preparing gluten-free foods to prevent cross-contamination with foods containing gluten. Cross-contamination can occur if foods are prepared on common surfaces, or with utensils that are not thoroughly cleaned after preparing gluten-containing foods. Using hard to clean equipment for both gluten-free and gluten-containing foods is one potential source of contamination. Toasters, strainers and flour sifters should not be shared. Deep-

fried foods cooked in oil also used to cook breaded products should be avoided. Spreadable condiments in shared containers may also be a source of contamination. When a person dips into a condiment such as mustard, mayonnaise, jam, peanut butter or margarine a second time with the knife used for spreading, the condiment becomes contaminated with crumbs and is not safe for consumption by individuals who cannot tolerate gluten. Consider using condiments in squeeze containers to prevent cross-contamination. Wheat flour can stay airborne for many hours in a bakery or at home and contaminate exposed preparation surfaces and utensils or uncovered gluten-free products.

Common sources of gluten:

(Note: gluten-free versions of these foods are widely available)

Breads	Croutons
Cereal Products	Flour
Cookies, Cakes and other Baked Goods	Pastas
Crackers	Stuffings and Dressings

Foods that may contain gluten and need to be verified:

Brown Rice Syrup	Processed Lunch Meats
Breading and Coating Mixes	Salad Dressings
Candy	Sauces and Gravies
Energy Bars	Seasoned Rice Mixes
Imitation Meats	Self-basting Poultry
Imitation Seafood	Soy Sauce or Soy Sauce Solids
Licorice	Soup Bases, Broth and Bouillon
Marinades	Teriyaki Sauce
Panko (Japanese bread crumbs)	Thickeners (Roux)

The following items also need to be verified:

Communion Wafers	Herbal & Nutritional Supplements
Drugs and Over-The-Counter Medications	Vitamin & Mineral Supplements

The gluten-free diet is a lifelong commitment and should not be started before being properly diagnosed. Starting the diet without complete testing is not recommended and makes later diagnosis difficult. Tests to confirm celiac disease could be falsely negative if a person were on a gluten-free diet for a period of time. For a valid diagnosis to be made, gluten would need to be reintroduced for at least several weeks before testing.

Modified from The Quick Start Gluten-Free Diet Guide for Celiac Disease & Non-Celiac Gluten Sensitivity, developed collaboratively in 2013 by: American Celiac Disease Alliance, Celiac Disease Foundation, Celiac Sprue Association, Gluten Intolerance Group, National Foundation for Celiac Awareness.

This article has been assessed and approved by a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist.

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Other helpful information is available at www.GLUTEN.org.

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.

Please consider your local GIG support group as another resource.

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

To make a donation or become a volunteer to GIG, visit our website or call the office at 253-833-6655.