

Going Gluten Free

You've been diagnosed with celiac disease... now what?

The good news is that celiac disease can be treated entirely with dietary changes. While these may seem like big changes, the options for gluten-free foods and the labeling of those have improved a lot over the past decade.

Gluten is a protein found in certain foods. When eaten by someone with celiac disease, the body responds by damaging the parts of the small intestine that help us absorb nutrients from our food. Going gluten-free is the only way to stop this from happening.

Where is gluten found?

- Wheat- including spelt, khorasan (popular now under the trademarked name Kamut®), and farro
- Rye
- Barley
- Triticale
- Some oat products due to cross contamination with gluten containing grains
 - Check the label of oat products to see if it is gluten-free
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While those foods may be easy to identify, gluten often “hides” in other foods. This means identifying sources of gluten can be tricky. To help with this, food companies can advertise on the package that the food is gluten-free if it meets certain criteria. This makes it easy to identify gluten-free foods.

Allergens need to be listed on food labels too. Celiac disease isn't really an allergy, but checking out the allergen list under the ingredients will indicate if the product contains wheat. But be careful, just because something doesn't have wheat in it doesn't mean it is gluten-free. The best way to know is to check the ingredient list.

Where does gluten hide? These are some examples of common sources, but there are more. Check the ingredient list if you aren't sure.

- Soups, sauces, and any food that may be made with a thickener
- Salad dressing
- Malt- including malt vinegar
- Beer and brewer's yeast
- Soba noodles- although these are buckwheat noodles, the buckwheat is often mixed with wheat flour
- Corn and rice cereals made with certain flavorings or malt extract

- Soy Sauce and miso
- Couscous (it's a pasta!)

Just because you need to eliminate some specific grains from your diet doesn't mean you need to be grain-free or cut out other carbohydrates. Those provide a main source of fuel for our bodies. Not only will cutting these out this mean you won't get enough carbohydrate, but you may not get enough fiber either. Fiber helps keep our gastrointestinal tracts healthy and promotes heart health too!

What are some gluten-free grains and carbohydrate sources?

- Rice
- Quinoa (can use this as a substitute in recipes calling for couscous)
- Oats that are labeled as gluten-free
- Buckwheat
- Corn
- Nuts and seeds
- Potatoes and other tubers (like jicama and cassava)
- Beans

Plus, there are many other nutritious foods that are naturally gluten-free:

- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Heart healthy fats, like oils and avocado
- Milk (some people with celiac may not be able to tolerate dairy, but if you can, this is gluten-free)
- Protein foods- fish, seafood, eggs, meat and poultry made without breading or sauces (unless gluten-free)

Gluten-free doesn't mean the same thing as healthy. There are many gluten-free products on the market, but remember that cakes, cookies, candy, and other "junk" foods still need to be limited. For someone with celiac disease it is not uncommon to gain weight after going gluten-free. This is because the body starts absorbing nutrients once the small intestine heals. To avoid any excess weight gain, watch out for high calorie (with a small portion) gluten-free foods.

Gluten-free bread is often dense and higher in calories than basic gluten containing breads. It is also not typically fortified or enriched with vitamins and minerals like regular white flour. Look for gluten-free foods that are enriched, like cereals, and eat a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, and lean meats to help get all the nutrients you need.

What about eating out?

Many restaurants indicate gluten-free foods on their menus, but that doesn't mean they are guaranteed to be gluten-free. It is possible for those gluten-free foods to be cross-contaminated during preparation or storage of ingredients. When in doubt, check to see if they prepare the food separately from other menu items and use different utensils/ cookware.

This sounds hard...

Just like everything else, a little practice goes a long way. The more comfortable you are looking at labels, the easier this will become. Plus, labeling laws make this easier than ever!

For more information, check out: <https://celiac.org> and <http://www.eatright.org/search?keyword=gluten>