

# Gluten-Free Diet



## Gluten-Free Diet Quick Start

As many as one in 133 adults in the United States suffer from an intolerance to gluten. Sometimes referred to as nontropical sprue, celiac disease, celiac sprue, or gluten-sensitive enteropathy, this condition is often misdiagnosed and misunderstood.

### What is gluten?

Gluten is a protein found in wheat and other flours. Grains that contain gluten include wheat, barley, and rye. Ingredients in foods made from these grains also contain gluten-things like farina, graham flour, semolina, durum wheat, bulgur, Kamut, kasha, matzo meal, spelt, and triticale. Common foods that contain gluten include white or whole wheat bread, flour tortillas, pita bread, crackers, many cereals, pasta, cookies, gravies, and sauces.

### What is gluten intolerance?

Gluten intolerance (or celiac disease) is a digestive condition triggered by eating gluten. When a person with gluten intolerance eats foods containing gluten, an immune reaction occurs in the small intestine. The result is damage to the villi on the surface of the small intestine and an inability to absorb nutrients from food.

### What are the signs of gluten intolerance?

Signs of this condition can vary widely, which is one reason it is so difficult to diagnose. Most people have general complains like diarrhea, abdominal pain, and bloating that comes and goes. Symptoms may be similar to those of irritable bowel syndrome, Crohn's disease, gastric ulcers, parasitic infections, or anemia. Some people with celiac disease have no gastrointestinal symptoms.

### What is the cause of celiac disease?

The exact cause of celiac disease is unknown. However, can be inherited. If someone in your immediate family has it, you may have it as well. Celiac disease can occur at any age but sometimes emerges after some form of trauma such as pregnancy, surgery, or a physical injury.

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## How is celiac disease diagnosed?

Celiac disease can be identified by a blood test that detects antibodies that are present when a person with celiac disease has eaten gluten. This can be found by studying a sample of the intestine under a microscope.

## How is celiac disease treated?

Celiac disease has no cure. It can be managed by completely removing gluten from the diet. Once you have done that the intestinal villi can heal completely. To manage the disease and prevent complications, you must avoid foods that contain gluten for the rest of your life.

## Important gluten-free (GF) diet basics:

- No wheat, rye, or barley
- Oats, with a similar protein, have been found to be cross-contaminated with gluten containing grains. Pure, uncontaminated oats, tested and labeled as gluten free, are now available and are considered safe to consume in moderation.
- Other names for wheat or wheat containing grains are: Spelt, kamut, einkorn, emmer, triticale, durum, farina, enriched flour, wheat starch, self-rising flour, graham flour, bulgar, semolina, cake flour, pastry flour, or matzo.
- Wheat-free does not mean gluten-free (GF). It still may contain rye or barley.
- Malt and malt flavorings are made from barley; they are not GF.

## Safe grains and flours:

- Rice, corn, quinoa, amaranth, arrowroot, buckwheat, Montina, flax, Job's tears, millet, potato, sago, soy, sorghum, tapioca, teff, cornstarch, manioc. Also, any flour made from nuts, beans, tubers or legumes.

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## Cross Contamination:

If a GF food comes in contact with a gluten-containing product, it is said to be “contaminated.” Steps can be taken to prevent this, including the following:

- Store gluten-free supplies separately from gluten foods.
- Designate certain appliances, such as a toaster, for use with GF products only.
- Use clean tools for cooking, cutting, mixing, and serving GF foods.
- Have separate containers of butter, peanut butter, and condiments, or institute a “no-double-dipping rule.”
- Do not purchase flour or cereal from open bins.

## Foods to choose when starting out:

Stick to plain, simple foods mostly found in the outer aisle of the grocery store including:

- All plain meats, poultry, fish, or eggs
- Legumes and nuts in all forms
- Corn and rice in all forms
- Dairy products including milk, butter, margarine, real cheese, plain yogurt
- All plain fruits or vegetables (fresh, frozen, or canned)
- Vegetable oils, including canola
- All vinegar except malt vinegar
- Any food that says it is gluten-free

## References:

1. Thompson, A, MS RD, Dobler, ML, MS RD. American Dietetic Association. Celiac Disease Nutrition Guide. 2003
2. National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse, Celiac Disease.