

Simple Start to the Gluten-Free Diet

Getting Started with Gluten-Free Living

If you are starting a gluten-free diet, you may be wondering about the dietary changes you need to make and how to safely avoid gluten. Fortunately, many gluten-free foods are readily available and naturally nutritious, simplifying the switch to gluten-free eating. Read our suggestions and tips below for ensuring a healthy transition to gluten-free living.

Gluten-Free Foods

There is a tremendous amount of gluten-free food available to you, and options are increasing every day. With the exception of the gluten-containing grains (wheat, rye, barley), fresh foods without processing or additives are naturally gluten-free.^{1,2}

Gluten-free foods include:

- Fresh/frozen fruits and vegetables (and their juices) without added ingredients, seasonings or sauces that contain gluten
- Unprocessed, plain fresh/frozen meat, poultry (chicken, turkey), fish and seafood
 - To learn more about USDA-regulated food labeling for processed meat and poultry, read our Gluten-Free Label Reading Guide. These foods follow different labeling rules and may contain hidden gluten.
- Plain, dried or canned legumes* (chickpeas, lentils, soybeans, etc.) and plain, dried or canned beans* (navy, pinto, black, etc.), if no gluten-containing ingredients are listed³
- Fresh, unprocessed eggs
 - Read more about USDA-regulated processed egg products, which follow different labeling rules and may contain hidden gluten.
- Milk and dairy products (plain milk, yogurt, cheese, cottage cheese, buttermilk, most ice creams); avoid malted dairy products
- Non-dairy beverages labeled “gluten free” such as rice, soy, hemp, and nut milks
- Potatoes, sweet potatoes, parsnips and turnips
- Plain nuts (walnuts, almonds, pecans, etc.) and seeds (sunflower, pumpkin, flax, etc.)
- Oils (butter, margarine, all vegetable oils)
- Condiments made with allowed ingredients (see "Ingredients to Avoid" section below)
- Beverages such as water, tea,** instant or ground coffee (regular or decaffeinated), pure cocoa without added ingredients
- Gluten-free grains and grain products, along with the products made from them that are labeled “gluten-free”; options include amaranth, buckwheat, corn, millet, quinoa, sorghum, teff, and the products made from these grains; plain rice and plain wild rice, which do not need to be labeled gluten-free.

*Lentils are allowed to contain a certain percentage of foreign grain, including wheat, barley and rye, unless labeled gluten-free. Whether labeled gluten-free or not, pour dried legumes (and beans) onto a cookie sheet and sort through for rocks and gluten-containing grains. Rinse and drain well. Also rinse and drain canned lentils.³

** Herbal tea may contain barley.

Read our comprehensive guide to the gluten-free diet by food category on CeliacNow.

Gluten-Free Grains and Starches^{1,2,4}

- With the exception of plain rice and plain wild rice, only buy grain and grain products that are labeled “gluten free.” Many naturally gluten-free grains and flours may be contaminated with gluten-containing grains.
- Try to eat whole or enriched gluten-free grains and products, such as amaranth, millet, buckwheat, teff, sorghum, and quinoa labeled gluten-free. Corn, potato, and white rice are also gluten-free starches/grains, but they have less fiber and fewer nutrients.
- Read more about the benefits of healthy and naturally gluten-free grains in our Fiber and the Gluten-Free Lifestyle and Super Six: Benefits of Gluten-Free Grains handouts.

Whole Grains and Flours with Higher Nutritional Value⁴

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|--|---|
| • Amaranth | • Nut flours (almond, chestnut, hazelnut) |
| • Bean flour | • Oat flour, oatmeal (specially produced, labeled gluten free oats) |
| • Brown rice flour | • Quinoa |
| • Whole brown rice | • Quinoa flour |
| • Buckwheat | • Seed flours (sesame, pumpkin) |
| • Buckwheat flour | • Sorghum |
| • Whole corn (also called maize) | • Sorghum flour |
| • Flax meal | • Soy flour (whole) |
| • Legume flours (garbanzo, bean, chickpea, Garfava flour, lentil, pea) | • Teff |
| • Mesquite flour | • Teff flour |
| • Millet | • Wild rice |
| • Millet flour | |

Refined Grains and Flours with Lower Nutritional Value⁴

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|--------------|-----------------|
| • Arrowroot | • Corn meal |
| • Corn bran | • Corn starch |
| • Corn flour | • Potato starch |
| • Corn germ | • Potato flour |

- Rice (glutinous, sweet, white)
- Rice flours (glutinous, sweet, white)
- Rice polish
- Rice bran
- Sago (edible starch from palm)
- Sweet potato flour
- Tapioca (also called cassava or manioc)
- Taro (edible starchy plant)

Ingredients to Avoid When Eating Gluten-Free

Avoid any food made with or containing the following:

- Wheat
- Barley
- Rye
- Malt
- Brewer's yeast
- Yeast extract and autolyzed yeast/yeast extract (unless labeled gluten-free)
- Oats (unless specially produced, labeled gluten-free oats)

The selection above introduces the seven key words to help you avoid gluten in a food product not labeled gluten free. Read the Gluten-Free Label Reading Guide on CeliacNow.org to understand the differences between the labeling laws for gluten-free foods set by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and how the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) labels the products it regulates.

View our detailed list of gluten-containing foods and ingredients to avoid on CeliacNow.org.

Avoiding Common Pitfalls of the Gluten-Free Diet

- Read labels carefully to avoid gluten. Ingredients and labels can change at any time without warning. If an ingredient list is not provided, contact the company directly for product information.
- “Wheat-free” does not necessarily mean “gluten free.” Wheat-free products may contain rye, barley, or oats (avoid oats unless they are specially produced, labeled gluten free oats).
- Consider the possibility of cross-contact between gluten-free foods and gluten containing foods.
- Gluten-free products cost more than products that are made with gluten-containing grains. Read our guide to eating gluten-free on a budget for ideas on how to save money.
- The gluten-free diet can be low in fiber, often due to processing. Fortunately, there are simple and healthy ways to include fiber in the gluten-free diet.
- Many gluten-free products are highly processed.⁶ During processing, in addition to fiber, vitamins and minerals can be lost. Fortified or enriched foods have vitamins and minerals

added back in after processing. Unlike many gluten-containing products (cereals, bread, pasta, etc.), most gluten-free products are not fortified with key vitamins and minerals.

- Look for gluten-free products that are labeled “fortified” and add them to your diet to make it more wholesome.⁵
- Shop the perimeter of the grocery store for naturally gluten-free fruits and vegetables; plain dairy products; and plain meat, fish, and poultry.
- Weight gain is common after starting a gluten-free diet.⁷
- Some products are “certified” gluten-free. Third-party gluten-free certification is a voluntary process designed to ensure that strict gluten-free standards are met in the testing and production processes of gluten-free labeled foods, beverages, and supplements. Manufacturers can choose to hire a third party to oversee and confirm the accuracy of their gluten-free processes and claims. Certifying criteria of some groups may be stricter than the FDA’s rules, which call for labeling food gluten-free at less than 20 parts per million (ppm) of gluten.
 - Note that it is not necessary to limit yourself to only certified gluten-free foods. Foods with specialty certifications may provide you with added confidence in the gluten-free foods you buy; however, this does not mean that foods without certifications are unsafe to eat.
- Whenever possible, consult with a registered dietitian who specializes in celiac disease to help you monitor your diet and health, identify overlooked sources of gluten, and share new ideas and recipes. If you have food allergies or other food intolerances, such as lactose intolerance, or another medical condition, a registered dietitian can help you create an individualized meal plan.⁸

Resources on the Gluten-Free Diet

Following a Gluten-Free Diet (CeliacNow.org), Celiac Center at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center

Celiac Resources (CeliacNow.org), Celiac Center at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center

[Getting Started on a Gluten-Free Diet](#), Gluten Intolerance Group

[Gluten-Free Foods](#), Celiac Disease Foundation

[What Can I Eat on a Gluten-Free Diet?](#) Shelley Case, RD

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