

GI Hub

Gluten-Free Diet Basics

What is a Gluten-Free Diet?

A gluten-free diet means avoiding all foods that contain gluten, a protein found in wheat, barley, rye, and their related grains. This diet is the only treatment for celiac disease and is important for your health.

Foods to Avoid

- Wheat (including spelt, kamut, emmer, einkorn, triticale)
- Rye
- Barley
- Foods made from these grains: bread, pasta, cereals, crackers, cookies, cakes, pizza, couscous, seitan, and some processed foods.
- Many sauces, soups, and processed foods may contain hidden gluten—always check labels.

Safe Foods

- Naturally gluten-free grains: rice, corn, buckwheat, millet, teff, amaranth, quinoa
- Gluten-free oats (look for certified gluten-free oats; most people with celiac disease can eat these safely)
- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Fresh meats, poultry, fish, eggs
- Dairy products (milk, cheese, yogurt)
- Legumes (beans, lentils)
- Nuts and seeds

Tips for Eating Gluten-Free

- Read food labels carefully. Look for “gluten-free” on packaging. In the US, gluten-free products must contain less than 20 parts per million (ppm) of gluten.
- Watch out for cross-contamination. Gluten can get into gluten-free foods during cooking or processing. Use separate utensils, toasters, and cutting boards for gluten-free foods.
- When eating out, ask about gluten-free options and how foods are prepared.
- Oats are safe for most people with celiac disease if they are labeled gluten-free. Some people may still react, so introduce oats slowly and talk to your healthcare team.

Nutrition and Health

- A gluten-free diet can sometimes be low in fiber, iron, calcium, folate, and some vitamins. Eat a variety of gluten-free whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and protein sources to help meet your nutrition needs.
- Routine check-ups with your healthcare team and a registered dietitian are important to monitor your health and nutrition.
- Supplements may be needed if you have a deficiency—ask your healthcare provider before starting any.

Support and Follow-Up

- Following a gluten-free diet can be challenging. Support from dietitians, healthcare providers, and patient organizations can help you succeed.
- Regular follow-up is important to check your progress, answer questions, and help you stay healthy.

Remember: Even small amounts of gluten can cause problems for people with celiac disease. Stay informed, ask questions, and reach out for help when needed.