

SECTION: LEARNING CENTRE

GLUTEN-FREE DIET

A gluten-free diet (GFD) is a diet that excludes gluten, a protein composite found in wheat, barley, rye, and all their species and hybrids (such as spelt, kamut, and triticale).

Gluten causes health problems in sufferers of gluten-related disorders, which include celiac disease (CD), non-celiac gluten sensitivity (NCGS), gluten ataxia, dermatitis herpetiformis (DH) and wheat allergy. In these patients, the gluten-free diet is a demonstrated effective treatment. In addition, at least in some cases, the gluten-free diet may improve gastrointestinal and/or systemic symptoms in other diseases, such as irritable bowel syndrome, rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis or HIV enteropathy, among others.

The Basic Gluten-Free Diet:

YES

Foods made from grains (and grain-like plants) that do not contain harmful gluten, including:

- Corn in all forms (corn flour, corn meal, grits, etc.).
- Plain rice in all forms (white, brown, wild, basmati, enriched rice, etc.).
- Amaranth, arrowroot, buckwheat (kasha), cassava, flax, millet, quinoa, sorghum, soy, tapioca and teff.
- Flours made from gluten-free grain, nuts, beans and coconut. Look for products labeled gluten-free to avoid cross-contamination.

Gluten-free ingredients:

- Annatto, glucose syrup, lecithin, maltodextrin (even when it is made from wheat), oat gum, plain spices, silicon dioxide, starch, food starch and vinegar (only malt vinegar might contain gluten). Also citric, lactic and malic acids as well as sucrose, dextrose and lactose; and these baking products: arrowroot, cornstarch, guar and xanthan gums, tapioca flour or starch, potato starch flour and potato starch, vanilla.

The following foods:

- Milk, butter, margarine, real cheese, plain yogurt, most ice cream without gluten-containing add-ins.
- Vegetable oils, including canola.
- Plain fruits, vegetables (fresh, frozen and canned), meat, seafood, potatoes, eggs, nuts, nut butters, beans and legumes.
- Distilled vinegar is gluten free. (See malt vinegar under NO below).
- Distilled alcoholic beverages are gluten free because distillation effectively removes gluten. They are not gluten free if gluten-containing ingredients are added after distillation, but this rarely happens.
- Mono and diglycerides are fats and are gluten free.
- Spices are gluten free. If there is no ingredient list on the container, it contains only the pure spice noted on the label.

NO

Wheat in all forms including spelt, kamut, triticale (a combination of wheat and rye), durum, einkorn, farina, semolina, cake flour, matzo (or matzah) and couscous. Wheat is found in many bread, cakes, cereals, cookies, crackers, pretzels, pasta, and pizza crusts, but it can turn up in other products, too. Read labels to be sure.

Most ingredients with “wheat” in the name including hydrolyzed wheat protein and pregelatinized wheat protein. Buckwheat, which is gluten free, is an exception.

Barley and malt, which is usually made from barley, including malt syrup, malt extract, malt flavoring and malt vinegar.

Rye, which is most often found in bread products. It is not typically used to make ingredients.

Breaded or floured meat, poultry, seafood and vegetables, when the breading is made with wheat. Also meat, poultry and vegetables when they have a sauce or marinade that contains gluten, such as soy and teriyaki sauces.

Foods that are fried in the same oil as breaded products are not considered to be safe on the gluten free diet.

Licorice, which is made with wheat flour, and other candies that contain wheat or barley.

MAYBE

Beer is gluten-free when made from gluten-free grains. Beer made from barley and processed to remove gluten is not considered to be gluten free.

Dextrin can be made from wheat, which would be noted on the label, and would not be gluten free.

Flavorings are usually gluten free, but in rare instances can contain wheat or barley. By law, wheat would have to be labeled in foods regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Barley is usually called malt flavoring. In extremely rare instances, neither barley nor malt is specified when used in a flavoring.

Modified food starch is gluten free, except when wheat is noted on the label, either as “modified wheat starch,” modified starch (wheat) or if the “Contains” statement at the end of the ingredients list includes wheat.

Wheat starch is allowed in gluten-free foods if the wheat starch has been processed to remove the gluten protein. In addition to a gluten-free label, the packaging of any product using safe wheat starch will note that it has been processed to meet FDA gluten-free standards. Wheat starch in foods that do not also have a gluten-free label are not safe on the gluten-free diet.

Oats are considered safe on the gluten-free diet if they have been specially processed to prevent cross-contamination by gluten-containing grains. These oats are labeled gluten free. Mainstream oats, including those commonly used in breakfast cereals, are not considered safe unless they are labeled gluten free.

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Oats are allowed as an ingredient in products labeled gluten-free as long as the final food meets the FDA gluten-free standard. This includes granola, granola bars, cookies and other products. Products that are made with oats but do not have a gluten-free label are not gluten free.

Prescription and over-the-counter drugs can contain gluten, although most are gluten free. Check with the pharmaceutical company, especially if you take the medication on a continuing basis.

Processed cheese (spray cheese, for example) may contain gluten. Real cheese is gluten free.

Seasonings and seasoning mixes can contain gluten. Wheat will be noted on the label as required by law.

Soy sauce is usually fermented from wheat. Only soy sauce made without wheat is gluten free. Look for soy sauce with a gluten-free label.

Sources: Wikipedia, Gluten-Free Living