

Coeliac Disease: An Introduction to a Gluten Free Diet for Coeliac Disease

This dietary advice sheet gives an introduction to coeliac disease and the need for a gluten free diet. You will still need to see a Registered Dietitian for more information and a review of your diet.

What is Coeliac Disease?

Coeliac Disease is a life-long condition that, if untreated, will damage the lining of the small intestine.

Nutrients in food are digested and absorbed into the body in a part of the digestive system called the small intestine. Gluten is a protein found in wheat, barley and rye. It can damage the lining of the small intestine in people with Coeliac disease. This damage will mean that you cannot absorb nutrients found in food.

If you have Coeliac Disease and it is not treated, you may have some of these symptoms:

- Weight loss
- Diarrhoea or altered bowel habits
- Anaemia (due to lack of iron absorption)
- Tiredness and weakness
- Abdominal discomfort
- Mouth ulcers
- Sore tongue
- Bone pain (due to lack of calcium absorption)

Not everyone has all these symptoms and the number of symptoms and severity vary greatly between people.

Please Note:

If it is suspected that you have Coeliac disease, you will need to have some tests.

Avoiding gluten in food before your tests are complete could affect the results.

You should not follow a gluten free diet until you have been told you have Coeliac disease.

Once you have been diagnosed with Coeliac Disease you need to have an appointment with a Registered Dietitian. This is important to help you change your diet.

The Gluten-free diet

Following a strict gluten-free diet will help the lining of your small intestine to recover and you will digest and absorb food normally. Your symptoms should then improve.

You should follow this diet strictly. It is a life-long treatment for Coeliac Disease

What can you eat?

Many foods are naturally gluten-free. These include:

- Potatoes and sweet potatoes
- Any type of rice
- Quinoa, polenta
- Fruit and vegetables (fresh, frozen or tinned without sauce)
- Salad
- All peas, beans and lentils (dried or tinned without sauce)
- Plain meats and fish,
- Eggs
- Milk, cheese and plain yogurt

Oats – if you want to include oats please make sure that these are “gluten free” or “uncontaminated” varieties. Do not eat regular or organic oats.

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Gluten Free Foods and “Free From” foods

Gluten-free foods can replace those that are normally made of wheat. These include bread, flour mixes, crackers and biscuits and pasta.

Unfortunately surgeries in Norfolk are no longer prescribing gluten free foods for people with Coeliac disease.

Choose “gluten free” foods from the “Free From” aisle in most supermarkets.

Search online for companies who produce gluten free food. They may offer online shopping or give details of where you can buy these locally.

Your Dietitian can provide you with a list of some of these companies.

Manufactured foods

Gluten can be “hidden” in many manufactured foods. Check the ingredient list of food labels for any **wheat, barley, rye or oat** ingredients. These will be highlighted.

Your Dietitian will recommend that you join the organisation Coeliac UK so that you can have access to the Food and Drink Directory.

The Food and Drink Directory is an online list of manufactured foods that are gluten-free and this can be useful if you don't like reading food labels.

If you prefer, you can request a paperback version of the Food and Drink Directory.

Coeliac UK also provide 2 apps for members, the Foodchecker app and Gluten free on the move, to check foods and scan barcodes for their suitability.

Coeliac UK

If you have Internet access you can join Coeliac UK via their website: www.coeliac.org.uk. The site will also give you lots of information about the condition.

Contamination

You need to take care to avoid gluten contamination when you prepare food.

- Do not use a toaster, that has been used to toast ordinary bread, for your gluten-free bread. Either have your own “uncontaminated” toaster or use a clean grill pan.
- Use a separate tub of margarine or spread so that others in the household do not put a used knife back in the tub and contaminate it.
- Make sure work surfaces, chopping boards, storage containers and pots and pans are clean before using them for gluten-free foods.
- Use clean knives and spoons in food preparation and cooking.
- Use clean oil or fat for frying. These will be contaminated with gluten if they have previously been used for battered or breadcrumbed food or any other food containing gluten.