

LIVING WITH CELIAC DISEASE

Managing celiac disease requires major dietary changes that can feel overwhelming. Learn what you need to know about this digestive disease and how to adopt a diet that will improve your health, minimize your symptoms and help you to regain quality of life.

You aren't alone in your celiac disease diagnosis. The board-certified [primary care providers](#) and [gastroenterologists](#) at Beaufort Memorial can help you understand how your diagnosis impacts your short- and long-term health. Our [registered dietitians](#) can work with you to make the dietary changes necessary to manage your condition.



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CELIAC DISEASE FAQs

Celiac disease is a serious medical condition that can have long-term impacts. Find answers to common questions about this disease and how it can be managed.

WHAT IS CELIAC DISEASE?

Celiac disease is an autoimmune disorder caused by an improper reaction to the protein gluten. When a person with celiac disease eats a food containing gluten, the body's immune system attacks the lining of the small intestine, reducing its ability to absorb nutrients. People with celiac disease can experience a number of digestive symptoms after eating gluten, including:

- Bloating
- Constipation
- Chronic diarrhea
- Gas
- Nausea
- Stomach pain

WHY DID I DEVELOP CELIAC DISEASE?

Celiac disease appears to have a genetic component. People with a sibling or parent with the condition have a 1 in 10 chance of developing it themselves. It also appears more commonly in women and people of northern European ancestry.

CELIAC DISEASE VS. GLUTEN INTOLERANCE VS. WHEAT ALLERGY

Celiac disease is an autoimmune disease in which gluten damages the small intestine.

Gluten intolerance, or gluten sensitivity, can cause a person to experience symptoms similar to, but not test positive for, celiac disease.

A **wheat allergy** occurs when the immune system overreacts to any of the proteins found in wheat. Symptoms often appear within minutes to hours after eating wheat.

IS THERE A CURE FOR CELIAC DISEASE?

No. Treatment involves eliminating gluten completely from the diet, which allows the small intestine to heal and gradually begin absorbing nutrients properly. People with celiac disease may notice symptoms disappearing days to weeks after going gluten free, but it can take several years for the small intestine to heal completely, according to the National Institute for Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases.

WHAT IS GLUTEN?

Gluten is a protein found in wheat, rye, barley and triticale (a wheat and rye hybrid). It can appear in any foods that contain these grains, including bread, cereal, crackers, pasta and pizza. Other grains, such as oats, may be contaminated with gluten if they are grown or processed near or with gluten-containing grains.

HOW DO I KNOW IF A FOOD IS GLUTEN-FREE?

According to Food and Drug Administration guidelines, products labeled as gluten free must contain no ingredients with gluten or be processed to remove gluten, and they must contain fewer than 20 parts per million gluten.

WHAT HEALTH RISKS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH CELIAC DISEASE?

The inability to properly absorb nutrients can cause diarrhea, anemia and weight loss. Over time, untreated celiac disease can increase the risk of other autoimmune disorders, such as Type 1 diabetes and multiple sclerosis, as well as heart disease, osteoporosis and migraines. In women, the condition can cause issues with infertility and miscarriage.

A primary care provider can test you for celiac disease and, if necessary, refer you to one of our board-certified gastroenterologists. [Find a provider accepting new patients.](#)



GLUTEN-FREE DIET DO'S & DON'TS

Not all gluten-free foods are created equal.

If you have celiac disease, going gluten free is necessary. Unfortunately, the label “gluten free” doesn’t automatically mean a food is healthy.

What can you do to prevent further intestinal damage, while maintaining your overall good health? A good first step is knowing which gluten-free options to avoid and which to enjoy.

GLUTEN-FREE DANGERS

To eat healthy and avoid gluten, stay away from these common nutritional potholes:

- **Processed and prepackaged foods.** Even if these foods are labeled gluten free, they could contain unhealthy levels of sugar, fat and salt, just as non-gluten-free processed foods can.
- **Refined rice flour.** A common ingredient in gluten-free processed foods, refined rice flour may lack the gluten that wheat flour has, but it also lacks its bran and germ — where fiber and other important nutrients are stored.
- **Nutrient-deficient foods.** Many traditional processed foods containing wheat are fortified with vitamins and minerals, such as iron and B vitamins. However, very few gluten-free processed foods follow suit. This can be problematic, because people with celiac disease can be deficient in calcium, folate, iron and vitamins A, B12, D, E and K.

GLUTEN-FREE GOODNESS

A healthy gluten-free diet should focus on whole, unprocessed foods. Stock up on:

- Beans, peas and lentils
- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Nuts
- Lean sources of protein, such as lean beef, chicken, fish and tofu
- Low-fat dairy products
- Oats labeled “gluten free”
- Whole grains, such as brown rice, wild rice, buckwheat, millet and quinoa, and whole-grain flours derived from them

You may need a supplement to ensure you consume sufficient vitamins and minerals. Ask your primary care provider or gastroenterologist if you should take one.

[A Beaufort Memorial dietitian can help you plan healthy, gluten-free meals.](#)



EATING OUT WITHOUT GLUTEN

Avoiding gluten is difficult when you aren't preparing your own meals, but a celiac disease diagnosis doesn't mean restaurant meals are no longer in your future. With a little planning, you can dine out and not suffer afterward.

Here's how.

- Don't take the claim “gluten free” at face value. Ask what a restaurant means by the term. Find out what ingredients are used and how the item is prepared.
- Research the restaurant's menu before going out. This way, you have a clear idea of what options are available to you.
- Notify your waiter that you have celiac disease and can't eat gluten, and politely request that all possible measures are taken to prevent cross-contamination.

With these small steps, you'll take a big leap toward a healthy and enjoyable dining experience, without any unpleasant side effects due to celiac disease.

GLUTEN FREE — MAYBE?

Watch for these sneaky sources of gluten if you have celiac disease.

FOOD

Blue cheese. Often requires mold cultivated from wheat, barley or rye for processing.

Candy. May be dusted with wheat flour.

Chocolate. May contain malt, a barley-derived ingredient.

Communion wafers. Typically made with flour.

Cream-based soups. Often includes wheat flour as a thickener.

French fries. May have wheat flour in the batter.

Mustard. Mustard powder may have gluten.

Soy sauce. Traditionally made with soy as well as wheat.

MISCELLANEOUS

Makeup. May contain small traces of gluten.

Medications, vitamins or supplements. May contain wheat starch that binds ingredients together.

Toothpaste. May contain wheat-based ingredients.



DRINKS

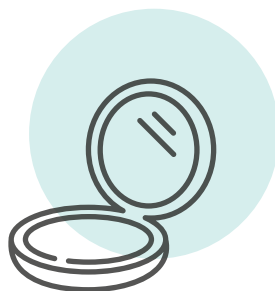
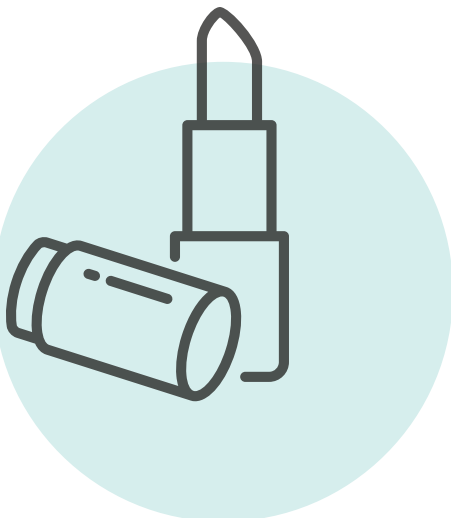
Beer. Typically made from malted barley or wheat.

Dessert wines. May have added color or flavoring that contains gluten.

Flavored teas. May contain barley seed or other gluten-containing grains.

CHECK THE LABEL

The Food and Drug Administration requires any food labeled gluten free to contain less than 20 parts per million gluten. If a food is not labeled gluten free, look for derivatives of wheat such as durum, semolina, spelt or graham. Also, check for less obvious ingredients that may contain gluten, such as rice syrup, unspecified seasonings and yeast extract.



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