

Gluten Free Living



Fact Sheet

The most common medical reason which requires a person to follow a gluten free diet is Coeliac Disease. The diagnosis of Coeliac Disease requires life long adherence to a gluten free diet. Consultation with an Accredited Practising Dietitian is recommended to advise on the practical aspects of a gluten free diet, to ensure a balanced diet and that your individual nutritional needs are met. This is particularly important where Coeliac Disease may exist with other medical conditions, such as diabetes or osteoporosis. This fact sheet provides some information on Coeliac Disease and Gluten Free Diets. For more detailed advice, please contact the Coeliac Society on (02) 9411 4100 or visit www.coeliac.org.au.

A gluten free diet should only be followed if directed by your doctor or dietitian.

Coeliac Disease

What is Coeliac Disease?

Coeliac Disease is an intolerance to gluten. This means your small intestine is sensitive to gluten. Gluten is the protein component of grains including wheat, rye, barley, triticale and oats. Even small amounts of gluten can cause damage to the lining of the small intestine. This can result in poor absorption of nutrients from food.

What are the long term risks of undiagnosed Coeliac Disease?

Chronic poor health, osteoporosis due to calcium malabsorption, infertility, miscarriages, depression, dental enamel defects and an increased risk of gastrointestinal and oesophageal carcinoma. In fact, it has been stated that undiagnosed Coeliac Disease can affect any organ or system of the body.

In children, undiagnosed Coeliac Disease can cause lack of proper development, short stature and behavioural problems.

Coeliac Disease is common in Australia and it can be mild, moderate or severe depending on the individual. Some people are even asymptomatic. The Coeliac Society states, "Coeliac Disease is now recognised as an under diagnosed life-long disease affecting over 250,000 Australians".

How is Coeliac Disease diagnosed?

Coeliac Disease needs to be diagnosed by a professional medical practitioner. Diagnosis is usually made following a series of blood tests and a small bowel biopsy.

What are the symptoms of Coeliac Disease?

It is important not to self-diagnose Coeliac Disease, which presents with a range of symptoms:

- Anaemia, which is also known as low iron (low iron is the most common form of anaemia but other forms of anaemia can be caused by low folate and /or vitamin B12)
- Diarrhoea or constipation
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Cramping, bloating, wind and abdominal pains
- Weight loss, although it's not uncommon not to lose weight
- Tiredness, fatigue, lethargy and weakness

It's important to note that these symptoms are common to a number of conditions, so always seek a professional medical opinion.

<http://www.coeliac.org.au/symptoms-diagnosis-symptoms.htm> makes reference to diagnosis in children and adults.

What is the cause and who is at risk of Coeliac Disease?

The cause of Coeliac Disease is unknown, although it is thought that genetic and environmental factors play a role. A higher proportion of people with Anglo-Celtic ancestry tend to have the disease.

If a person is diagnosed with Coeliac Disease, research suggests that around 10 per cent of first degree relatives (ie parents, siblings or offspring) to that person might also have the condition.

Is there a cure for the condition?

There is no cure, however Coeliac Disease can be managed by following a strict life-long gluten free diet, which allows the villi, (the microscopic, finger-like projections of the small intestine) to recover and assist in normal absorption of nutrients.

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Foods to avoid

A person with Coeliac Disease needs to avoid any foods that contain gluten. It is important to check labels of all packaged or prepared foods. You should consult with an accredited dietitian or doctor who will provide you with up-to-date information on foods which need to be avoided.

How can I tell if a food product is gluten free?

Foods that are labelled Gluten Free must adhere to the Australian Food Standard Code, which requires that:

- Food labelled as 'gluten free' must not contain any detectable gluten and no oats or malt .
- Food labelled as 'low gluten' must contain less than 0.02% gluten.

CSR Sugar's Gluten Free Icing Mixtures have been tested by accredited laboratories and accredited by the Coeliac Society with Gluten Free status.

People who have Coeliac Disease and are gluten intolerant can be reassured to know that each batch of CSR Gluten Free Icing Mixture undergoes a strict gluten testing regime to ensure absolute product integrity.

Remember, it is very important to get a professional, medical diagnosis before embarking on a gluten free diet.

Gluten Free Diet

I need to begin a gluten free diet. What are the most common gluten free foods?

It is important to undertake a gluten free diet only under the direction of a professional medical practitioner or an accredited dietitian.

There are many naturally gluten free ingredients / foods available, including grains and legumes like rice, corn (maize), potato, buckwheat, millet, amaranth, quinoa, soy and lentils.

Always check the ingredients panel on food and beverage products before you consume them and, if you're not sure, don't consume the product.

Most fresh foods that are gluten free include:

Fruits and vegetables, dairy foods (like plain milk, plain yoghurt, cream and cheeses) meat, poultry, fish and eggs.

There is also a good range of packaged gluten free foods such as:

Select cereals and baking products, which are made from corn (maize) flour, polenta, lentil and soya flour, rice and rice flour, rice bran, buckwheat, potato flour, millet, amaranth and psyllium.

Rice and corn based biscuits such as rice crackers, corn cakes and rice crispbreads. Make sure you check the ingredient panel in case the flavouring contains gluten.

Pasta and noodles – rice noodles and bean vermicelli, gluten free pasta and 100% buckwheat noodles.

Some spreads, sauces and salad dressings, such as jams, golden syrup and honey, tomato paste and tahini.

Snack foods including plain potato and corn chips, popcorn and plain chocolate.

Beverages like coffee and tea, mineral waters, wine, soft and sports drinks, most spirits and liqueurs (check in case of gluten-containing ingredients, though).

Gluten Free Baking

Some useful tips for great gluten free baking:

- Gluten is the protein found in wheat, rye, barley, triticale and oats. In wheat products such as cakes and biscuits that are baked, the gluten sets, creating an aerated porous product. This texture is a little more difficult to achieve with rice, maize or soy flour. Orgran Gluten Free Gluten Substitute (added to gluten free flours) helps in creating a better crumb structure in biscuits and cakes.
- There are many not so obvious foods which contain gluten, so it's important to read labels carefully. If using cornflour, check for the variety derived from maize or corn rather than wheat. Similarly with custard powders, baking powders and other gluten-free products, look at additive / thickener descriptions carefully, as they will state whether or not these are derived from wheat.
- Polenta is a yellow maize or cornmeal. It is graded fine, medium or coarse ground. Choose fine grind or instant polenta. Polenta adds a wonderful, nutty texture to gluten free cakes and puddings.
- Gluten free baking products are generally found in the health food aisle of the supermarket. The CSR Gluten Free Icing Mixture range can be found in the sugar aisle of your supermarket.