

Patient information

Questions and answers about Coeliac disease

Contact dietitian Telephone.....

Am I able to receive gluten-free foods on prescription?

Unfortunately, with effect from 1 February 2016, adults aged 18 and over are no longer able to receive gluten-free products on prescription in the West Suffolk area. Prescriptions will continue for children up to the age of 18. If you would like further information or have any concerns, please speak to your dietitian or GP.

Are there any other foods or ingredients I should know about?

- Buckwheat - this comes from a plant related to rhubarb and is gluten-free.
- Bulgar and couscous - these are normally wheat based and are not suitable for people with coeliac disease, however, gluten free couscous is now available.
- Hydrolysed Vegetable Protein (HVP) - these can be made from vegetable proteins and added to some foods. They can also be made from cereals, but any gluten is broken down so that HVP is safe for people with coeliac disease. Ensure to check the label.
- Isomalt - this is made from sugar beet and found in some sweets. It is gluten free and safe for you to eat.
- Liquorice - this is made from liquorice root and wheat and is therefore not suitable.
- Monosodium Glutamate (MSG) - this is added to lots of readymade foods to bring out the flavour. MSG is safe for you to eat, but you should check that the other ingredients in the food are gluten free.
- Textured Vegetable Protein (TVP) and Tofu - TVP is made from soya flour and tofu is made from soya beans. They are both gluten free but do check the label for any information on cross contamination.

Can I eat oats and oat products?

It is now recommended that people with Coeliac disease can introduce oats at any stage. You should ensure that they are labelled gluten-free as most oats are prepared in an environment contaminated by wheat, barley and rye. The Coeliac UK Food and Drink Guide has a page on oats and oat products that are gluten free. It is worth noting that a small number of individuals are still sensitive to oats. If you continue to experience symptoms on a strict gluten-free diet, including uncontaminated oats, then you may be advised to trial stopping them by your dietitian or doctor.

What about wheat starch?

Many special gluten free foods contain Codex wheat starch. This is form of wheat which has been washed to reduce the gluten levels to make it safe to eat for most people with coeliac disease. Normal wheat starch is not gluten free and should therefore be avoided. Modified starch is present in many foods that can be made from wheat, corn or potatoes. If it is made from a gluten-containing cereal, this must be shown on the label e.g., modified wheat starch. If the label just says modified starch, it is gluten free and safe to eat.

Can I eat yeast?

Fresh yeast is naturally gluten-free. Please note that some manufacturers may use wheat starch in the production of dried yeast. This form of dried yeast is not gluten free. You can find a list of suitable brands of dried yeast in the Coeliac UK Food and Drink Guide.

Can I eat maltodextrin?

Maltodextrin is gluten-free. It is used as a food additive and it can be made from grains such as wheat, corn, tapioca or rice. Despite some cereals used to produce maltodextrin are not-gluten free, the process used to make maltodextrin removes the gluten and it is therefore safe to eat.

Can I use gluten-free flour and foods from health food shops?

Spelt, triticale and kamut flour:

These flours are lower in gluten, but they are not completely gluten free. They are not suitable for people with coeliac disease.

Pulse flours:

Flours made from pulses such as Gram and Urd are naturally gluten free, but they are usually made in factories where wheat flour is made. It is best to avoid them unless they are clearly labelled as gluten free or listed in the Coeliac UK Food and Drink Guide.

Can I buy food from the bakery?

Although some bakery foods may not be made with gluten e.g., macaroons and meringues, they may have been prepared in places where gluten containing foods are made and are therefore contaminated. It is worth noting that gluten free bakeries are now available. You can check a list of suitable bakeries on Coeliac UK website.

Can I eat malt and foods with malt extract?

Malt is made from barley and is not gluten free. Malt extract and malt flavourings are broken down but still contain some gluten. Most people with coeliac disease can eat small amounts but the amount in the products can vary. It is therefore best to avoid these products unless they are clearly labelled gluten free.

How strict does my gluten free diet need to be?

Your gluten free diet must be followed strictly. Continuing to eat gluten, however, small the amount, will still cause damage to the lining of your small intestine. This will affect how well your body can absorb nutrients from your food and can lead to nutrient deficiencies. These can then result in your bones becoming thin and brittle. It is important that your gluten free food is not touched by foods containing gluten (cross-contaminated) during preparation, cooking or serving. Remember to use separate butter knives, bread boards and toasters (or toaster bags for your gluten-free bread in your regular toaster).

Are drugs and medicines gluten free?

Most drugs and medicines are gluten free and safe for people with Coeliac disease. However, it is still important for you to check with your pharmacist or doctor. Toothpaste and mouth washes are gluten free.

Can I play with play dough?

Play dough contains wheat flour. It is therefore important to wash your hands well after use. You can make your own play dough from gluten free flour.

Food manufacturers change the ingredients of their products, so it is important to check the labels regularly. Keep up to date with changes to ingredients as published by Coeliac UK.

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format: 01284 712555 Patient Advice Liaison Service.

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities, please visit the hospital website www.wsh.nhs.uk and click on the link, or visit the AccessAble website:

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