

Gluten-free foods becoming more prevalent

If you've been paying close attention at the grocery store recently, you've probably noticed some new "gluten-free" labels on certain foods. Over the past few years, the number of gluten-free foods found in grocery stores has grown at a rapid rate in response to the increasing number of people with celiac disease.

According to Jolanda Denham, M.D., in the Division of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition at Nationwide Children's Hospital, "One out of every 133 individuals in the United States currently has celiac disease. That means that one out of every 22 individuals has an immediate family member with celiac disease."

Celiac disease is an intolerance to gluten, which is the general name of proteins found in wheat, rye, barley and other grains derived from them. When someone who is genetically predisposed to celiac disease eats a food with gluten, the intestines become inflamed.

This inflammation can result in:

- abdominal pain
- diarrhea
- irritability
- weight loss
- underdevelopment of height
- anemia (especially iron-deficiency anemia)
- osteopenia (weak bones, frequent broken bones)
- specific rash (dermatitis herpetiformis).

For those with celiac disease, symptoms can develop at any time — from the first

time someone is exposed to gluten to adulthood. Celiac disease tends to run in families, so immediate family members of celiac disease patients are at risk for developing the disease. Why the disease develops in some people at risk for the disease but not others is currently unknown.

Medications are not used for celiac disease. Instead, strict adherence to a gluten-free diet stops the inflammation and therefore, treats the symptoms.

Most grocery stores offer gluten-free versions of many common foods. Examples include flour, chicken broth, soy sauce, and even tortillas (so no sacrificing of the ever-popular quesadilla is necessary).

Parents of children with celiac disease often are concerned their child may not be getting enough nutrients, especially if he or she has intolerance to certain foods. Fortunately, most gluten-free foods have about the same nutrients as those with gluten. "One can grow and thrive on a gluten-free diet. However, as many grains with gluten are fortified with B vitamins, I recommend a daily multivitamin for those on a gluten-free diet," said Denham.

Jolanda Denham, M.D. is an attending physician in the division of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition at Nationwide Children's Hospital.



Foods for celiac disease patients to avoid

- Bouillons and broths
- Breading (such as the coating on breaded chicken cutlets, etc.)
- Brown rice syrup (frequently made from barley)
- Cake flour (made from wheat)
- Caramel color (occasionally made from barley)
- Communion wafers
- Couscous
- Creamed or breaded vegetables
- Dextrin (a rare ingredient that may be made from wheat; maltodextrin is okay)
- Dry roasted nuts (processing agents may contain wheat flour or flavorings)
- Fried chicken
- French fries (if they've been coated in flour)
- Gravies and sauces (including some tomato and meat sauces)
- Imitation bacon, crab, or other seafood
- Luncheon and processed meats
- Malt or malt flavoring (usually made from barley)
- Marinades
- Matzo
- Modified food starch (most food manufacturers now specify the source of this ingredient; e.g., modified cornstarch, which is okay, or modified wheat starch, which is not)

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