

Starting the Gluten-Free Diet:

for more info about Celiac Disease and Dermatitis Herpetiformis, visit www.gfutah.org.



The GF diet is a life long commitment and should not be started before being properly diagnosed with CD/DH. Starting the diet without complete testing is not recommended and makes diagnosis later more difficult. Tests to confirm CD could be negative if a person were on the GF diet for very long. A valid test would require reintroducing gluten (a gluten challenge) before testing. Celiac disease is an inherited autoimmune disease and confirmation of CD will help future generations be aware of the risk of CD within the family. For more information about CD tests, visit www.gfutah.org/diagnosis.htm.

1. Start Simply / Keep a Diary

Start with unprocessed foods such as fresh fruits, vegetables, meat, rice, and potatoes that don't have any labels to decipher. Use olive oil, salt, pepper, and lemon juice for seasoning. This may be a bit boring, but can help the intestines heal rapidly. Some people diagnosed with celiac disease find that foods containing lactose and/or high fat content can be difficult to digest at first, but later may be well tolerated as the intestines begin to repair themselves.

Keep a record of the foods eaten and how they make you feel. Add new foods as they are tolerated. Keep track of the gluten-free specialty products and recipes you try, writing down which ones you liked and which you did not.

2. Find Support

Utah Gluten Intolerance Groups are a very good resource for learning about Celiac Disease and the Gluten Free Diet. Invest in your health and attend one of our meetings. Consider becoming a member of the Gluten Intolerance Group of North America, a national support organization working with others to improve the lives of people with Celiac and other Gluten Intolerance Diseases. GIG is a proud member of the American Celiac Task Force.

You will also want the support of family and friends as you adjust to this change in lifestyle. Let the people who care about you know how they can help. Encourage your family and friends to help with cooking, shopping etc. Ask for help with other responsibilities so you can have more time for cooking, shopping and learning the Gluten Free diet.

3. Learn About Your Diet

Read the Quick Start Diet Guide included at the end of this document. More detailed information can be obtained from the Gluten Intolerance Group of North America. If possible, make an appointment to visit a registered dietician. For gluten-free recipes, visit www.gfutah.org/recipes.htm. Be careful about anything you put in your mouth. Some medications and even stamp/envelope glue may contain gluten.

4. Organize Your Pantry

Keep track of which foods in your home are gluten-free and which are not. Clear a special shelf or area just for gluten-free foods. Or make the whole kitchen gluten-free, and have a separate shelf for other members of the household to keep their gluten containing food.

If there are both gluten-containing and gluten-free foods in your kitchen, mark the packaging of the gluten-free foods with a black permanent marker. Gluten-free condiments (such as butter and mayonnaise) must be kept free of contamination from gluten containing foods such as bread crumbs. You will need a dedicated gluten-free toaster. Any cookware or utensils that cannot be thoroughly cleaned after each use (i.e. in a dishwasher) will need to be kept gluten-free as well.

5. Find Gluten-Free Food

For a list of local stores selling gluten-free products, visit www.gfutah.org/stores.htm.

Grocery Stores can be a good source for corn tortillas, rice, fruits, vegetables, beans, meat, fish, poultry, milk, eggs, and other naturally gluten-free foods that are the basis of a healthy diet.

Health Food Stores can be a good source for gluten-free bread, pasta, cereal, cookies, baking mixes, flours, and xanthan gum, etc.

Oriental Markets can be a great source for finely ground rice flour, potato flour, and tapioca flour at a very low price.

Mail-Order Vendors can be good sources for hard to find gluten-free baked goods and mixes.

When looking for processed or convenience foods, grocery product guides such as the one found at <http://forums.delphiforums.com/ceeliac> can help point out gluten-free products. Label reading is the key to selecting gluten-free products. When using a product guide, labels still need to be read because product formulas change from time to time.

6. Take Food With You

When leaving home it is a good idea to take along some gluten-free food:

- Gluten-free energy bars, trail mix, jerky, and fruit snacks travel well in a purse, bag or car to have on hand for emergencies.
- Gluten-free sandwiches can be packed for lunches at school.
- Left-over dinner meals make good lunches for the office.
- Have your doctor write a note if you would like to bring something to eat at ball games and sporting events where outside food may be restricted.
- Consider bringing a main dish and a side dish to pot luck socials if you want to have plenty of food to eat.
- When attending a special event, contact the caterer or event coordinator ahead of time to ensure a proper gluten-free meal is prepared.
- When possible, eat well before social gatherings so you can simply enjoy the company.
- Sacraments and communion services generally use wheat based bread or wafers that are not appropriate for a celiac diet. Speak with your church leaders to find out what they recommend for communion services.

7. Eat Gluten-free when Dining Out

When dining at a restaurant, look for menu items that can easily be made gluten-free:

- Grilled meat, fish and poultry, baked potatoes, and steamed vegetables are examples of dishes that often can be prepared without gluten.
- If it is your first time eating a gluten-free meal at the restaurant, you may want to speak with the chef. Also, you may want to share a restaurant card with the server or chef. Restaurant cards that briefly explain the gluten-free diet are available from the Gluten Intolerance Group.
- Ask your server for help in choosing a menu selection and let your server know that your meal must be prepared gluten-free. For example, the server needs to know that when you order a salad without croutons, that it is not okay to remove the croutons from a prepared salad. The salad must be made fresh without contacting gluten containing ingredients.
- If your steak is being cooked on a grill that is also used for breaded items, then your selection should be prepared on a piece of aluminum foil or in a clean pan.
- Check the ingredients in any marinades and seasonings or ask to have your meat and vegetables prepared without seasonings.
- French fries prepared in the same oil that was used for frying breaded foods, such as onion rings or chicken nuggets, will not be gluten-free.

Some restaurants have gluten-free menus. Visit www.gfutah.org/restaurants.htm for a list of local restaurants that provide gluten-free menus. Even when ordering at a restaurant with a gluten-free menu, let your server know that you need a gluten-free meal and that your food should not come in contact with other gluten-containing foods.

8. Visit Your Doctor for Follow-up Care.

A review article in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, Vol. 69, No. 3, 354-365, March 1999, "The Widening Spectrum of Celiac Disease", by Dr. Joseph Murray, gives helpful information about treatment for celiac patients. You may view and print the complete article from the internet and share it with your physician.

<http://www.ajcn.org/cgi/content/full/69/3/354>

Bone density should be measured in adults at or shortly after the time of diagnosis because osteopenic bone disease is common and may be profound in patients with newly diagnosed celiac disease. Basic blood work is also included in the initial assessment. Such things as anemia and liver function need to be looked for. But it is important to go further than that, and knowledge of the physiology of the small intestine should lead a physician to measure those nutrients that could be malabsorbed. **Celiac Disease involves the small intestine, where iron, folic acid, calcium, fat soluble vitamins (Vitamins K, A, D, and E) and zinc are absorbed. These nutrients should be measured in the initial assessment and also during the course of the illness.**