

ZERO GLUTEN

If you have coeliac disease, gluten intolerance or simply want to see if you can feel better by excluding gluten from your diet, there is one simple rule. Eat no gluten at all. Don't reduce it, don't save it for treats. Because gluten intolerance provokes an immune response, there's no halfway house. That means don't eat any gluten-containing foods and try to minimise cross contamination with gluten products. The food industry has come a long way in the last few years, developing products and menus that contain no gluten, but you do need to be vigilant.

To start, you might find going zero gluten a struggle, but label checking and spotting cross contamination hazards will soon become second nature. Here are my biggest tips for following a zero gluten diet.

- 1 Become an avid reader of food labels. Get to know which food types and which brands contain gluten and, therefore, need to be avoided.
- 2 Don't be afraid to say you need to avoid gluten. Real friends will try to accommodate you, and restaurants have an obligation to point out any potential allergens (and remember you are paying for the meal).
- 3 Carry an emergency snack (nuts, seeds, a protein bar) in case there really is nothing else to eat.

Foods that contain gluten

Wheat, rye, barley, spelt
Durham wheat
Kamut
Semolina
Bread and breaded or battered foods
Pasta and noodles
Soy sauce
Worcestershire Sauce
Many flavoured crisps
Barley squashes
Beer, lager, stout, ales
Cous cous
Bulgar wheat
Pies and pastries
Pizza
Cakes and biscuits
Dumplings and Yorkshire puddings
Breakfast cereals
Muesli

Other ingredients

Malt extract, syrup
Malt vinegar
Barley malt flavouring
Brewer's yeast
Edible starch

Eating out...

Many restaurants now offer a gluten free (GF) menu and, if not can often advise on GF options on a standard menu. If something is not listed as being 'gluten free', always ask the waiting staff. If they don't know, ask them to check with the chef. Sauces are one of the things you always need to check. Check chips are not fried in the same oil used for breaded products.

It's a good idea to call ahead to find out what the GF options are. You'll soon build up a bank of favourite destinations you know can cater for you. Pizza Express and Prezzo now offer a GF pizza base, Carluccio's, Jamie's Italian and Zizzi's have GF pasta. Ask has both. Coeliac UK provides a pretty comprehensive listing. Register as a member at coeliac.org.uk

Cross contamination

This can happen very easily in the kitchen. Grills, pans, chopping boards and utensils may still have traces of gluten on them so wash them diligently. Take care if using normal flour as residues can remain in the air for up to 24 hours and settle on counters. Crumbs are another hazard – you'll want a separate butter or spread you can designate GF. You'll also want a new toaster, or use toast bags to prevent the transfer of crumbs.

Hidden gluten

Hidden gluten is found in many processed foods, including sausages and beefburgers, sauces and gravies. Some products, while they contain no gluten-based ingredients, may have been produced in a factory that handles gluten. This means cross contamination is possible (imagine gluten free food surrounded by puffs of normal flour). These are also ideally avoided.