

SPECIAL DIETS



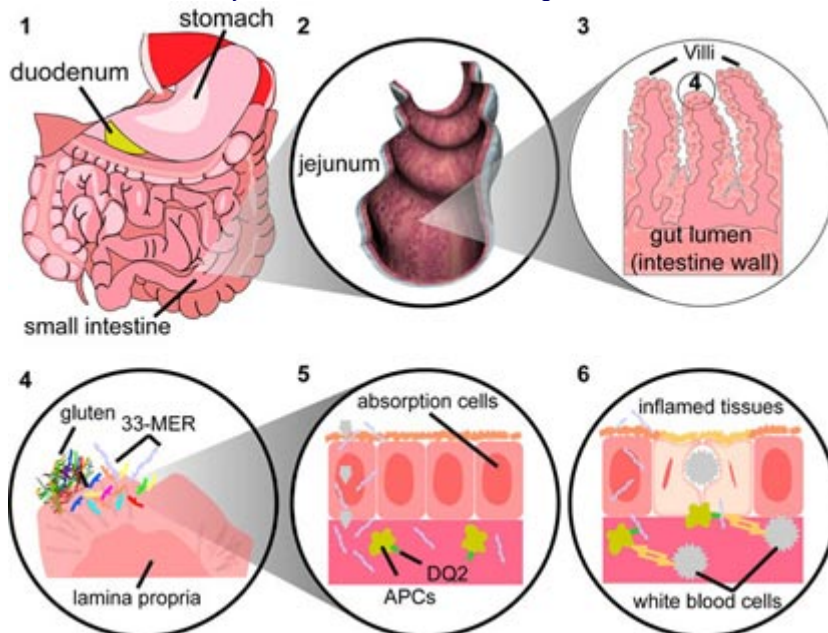
Making small changes to your diet or eating plan can be exactly what you need for good health and healthy aging. Many diseases and conditions, including allergies, and/or your family history, can require changes in your diet to keep you feeling well and in good health.

In many cases, a doctor will prescribe a modified diet, along with exercise suited to your condition. Sometimes, this diet therapy is nothing more than a good, nutritious diet balanced in carbohydrates, proteins and fats, or one that requires frequent mini-meals. Most special diets can be just as tasty and easy to follow as traditional eating plans.

Nutrients in foods are nature's secret weapons for good health. This month we bring you information on celiac disease. If you have this conditions, or would like to change your diet to improve your health, review the dietary recommendations to ensure you get all the nutrients you need:

What is celiac disease?

Celiac disease is also known as celiac sprue, nontropical sprue, and gluten-sensitive enteropathy. The exact cause of celiac disease is not clear; however, the outcome is well established. This disease effects the small intestine and its ability to absorb nutrients, resulting in deficiencies and health complications.



Gluten is a protein found in wheat, rye, and barley. When you have celiac disease your body reacts to gluten as if it were toxic. This reaction occurs in the small intestine and ends up damaging the mucosal surface (the

inner lining of the small intestine). When the mucosal surface is damaged the small intestine is not able to absorb nutrients properly. These nutrients include vitamins, calcium, carbohydrates, protein, and fats.

What Is a Gluten-Free Diet?

Before tackling the gluten-free diet, let's get to know our culprit. Gluten is a specific type of protein, but one you won't find in meat or eggs. Instead gluten is found in wheat, rye and barley. Going gluten-free means avoiding these grains. A gluten-free diet is essential for most people with celiac disease, a condition which causes intestinal damage when gluten is eaten.

Gluten 'Red Flags'

People on a gluten-free diet need a sharp eye for labels. Some ingredient red flags are obvious, like wheat, wheat gluten, barley, or rye. But some foods have "stealth" gluten. Two terms to watch for are malt (which is made from barley) and hydrolyzed vegetable protein (it often contains wheat). And while oats do not contain gluten, they may also increase symptoms, including abdominal pain, bloating, and diarrhoea.



Say Bye-Bye to Bread...Mostly

Perhaps the most difficult step in a gluten-free diet is bidding farewell to bread as you know it -- that includes white, wheat, marble, and rye. Also off limits are bagels, muffins, croissants, hamburger buns, scones -- you get the idea. Yes, even pizza. But don't despair. There are alternatives.

Dig in to Rice and Potatoes

On a gluten-free diet? Say hello to filling, flexible rice and potatoes. You can top them with just about anything, mix them into meals, or enjoy them on their own. Still mourning the loss of your favourite pasta? Here's a secret: When you're really craving a bowl of spaghetti, it is possible to find gluten-free pasta -- just think rice noodles.

Who Misses the Breading?

You don't need to hide the succulent charms of fresh chicken, fish, and beef under a bunch of bread. Go for lean meat without any additives and you'll be eating right for a gluten-free diet. Do keep in mind that hot dogs and deli meats are processed, so check the ingredients for additives that might contain gluten.

Beer Contains Wheat -- Who Knew?

Unfortunately for fans of the six-pack, most beers are made with barley malt. While there are some gluten-free beers, it's best to check with your doctor or dietician about whether these are safe for you.

Cheers! You Can Still Raise a Glass

Wine and liquors are generally gluten-free, so you can still raise a glass and offer a toast, no matter what the occasion.

There's So Much More to Enjoy

Along with wine, potatoes, and rice, there are even more delicious foods and drinks that are safe to enjoy on a gluten-free diet, such as eggs, fish, meat, fruits, vegetables, and milk products.

A small note: When using frozen or canned fruits and vegetables, check for additives that might contain gluten. The same goes for processed cheese spreads and flavoured yogurts.

When Dining Out, Talk It Out

One of the biggest challenges in maintaining a gluten-free diet is decoding a restaurant menu. Don't be shy. Talk with your server or the chef and explain your dietary needs -- they're there to satisfy you.

Stay Symptom-Free

For most people with celiac disease, even small amounts of gluten can cause symptoms like gas and bloating, changes in bowel movements, weight loss, fatigue, and weakness. That's why going gluten-free can be a big help -- no matter how mild or serious your symptoms.