



## **Your Guide to Reading Food Labels and Buying Gluten-Free Food**

## Table of Contents

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| Labeling and the Gluten-Free (GF) Diet .....          | Page 3  |
| Three Steps to Reading the Label .....                | Page 3  |
| Buying Grains, Grain Products, Flour and Cereal ..... | Page 4  |
| About Oats .....                                      | Page 4  |
| GF Labeling and GF Certification .....                | Page 5  |
| When is Food Considered GF? .....                     | Page 5  |
| GF Certification .....                                | Page 6  |
| Allergen Statements .....                             | Page 5  |
| Wheat Free Versus Gluten Free .....                   | Page 6  |
| Safe Wheat-Derived Ingredients .....                  | Page 7  |
| Wheat Starch .....                                    | Page 7  |
| Voluntary Allergen Advisory Statements .....          | Page 8  |
| USDA-Regulated Food Products .....                    | Page 9  |
| Medications .....                                     | Page 9  |
| Additional Information and Resources .....            | Page 10 |



## Labeling and the Gluten-Free Diet

Reading all ingredient labels is an important step in staying healthy and gluten free (GF). The good news: Even though it may seem overwhelming to have to read labels, it will soon become second nature to you.

To avoid foods that contain gluten, a protein found in wheat, rye and barley, read the ingredient label on anything you are eating or drinking. Even if you have checked a food product before, ingredients frequently change, so check each time you have the food. Plus: Contact the manufacturer directly if you are unsure about a product.

### Three (3) Steps to Reading the Label

Follow these three steps to determine if a product is GF:

1. Check if the product has a GF label. This may or may not be listed. If the product is labeled GF, then it is considered safe. If not, go to step 2.
2. Look for an allergen statement within or after the ingredient listing. **Note:** WHEAT must be declared if present in any foods regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Avoid if the food contains wheat. If wheat is not listed, go to step three.
3. If a product is NOT labeled GF, look through the ingredient listing for these six (6) ingredients for foods to avoid:
  - **Wheat**
  - **Rye**
  - **Barley**
  - **Malt**
  - **Brewer's yeast**
  - **Oats**



## Buying Grains, Grain Products, Flour and Cereal

**Always** select grains, grain products, flour, cereals and oats that are labeled GF due to high risk of cross-contact with gluten-containing grains\*.

**Never** buy grains, flours, nuts, seeds or legumes from bulk bins due to the risk of cross-contact with gluten. Always buy pre-packaged foods.

**\*Note:** This doesn't apply to rice, as rice has a low risk of cross contact.

### About Oats

Most commercially available oats are not safe on the GF diet due to cross-contact with gluten-containing grains. This happens through crop rotation, harvesting, processing and transportation. However, there are GF sources of oats available that should be safe for most people with celiac disease. Here's our "always and never" oats list:

#### Oats: Our "Always and Never" List

- **Always** select oats and oat products that are specifically labeled or certified gluten free.
- **Always** ask your dietitian or doctor about introducing GF oats into your diet and about reliable sources of GF oats.
- **Always** avoid oats if you react to the protein in oats (note: this applies to a small number of people with celiac disease)
- **Never** buy oats from bulk bins (risk of cross-contact with gluten)



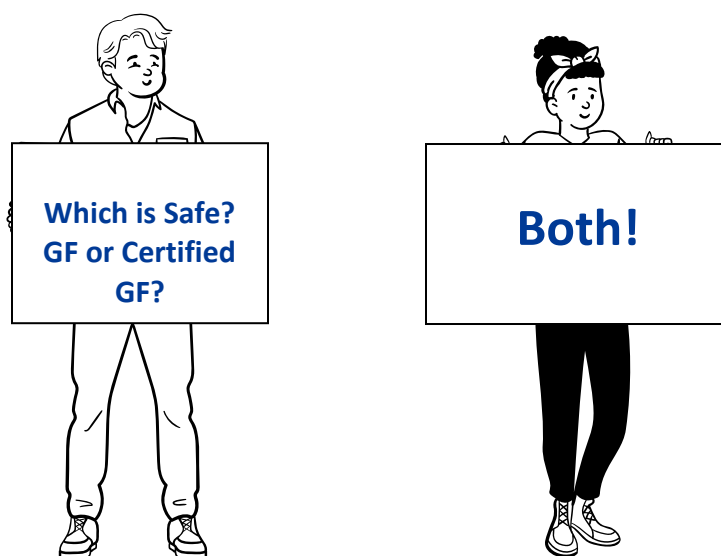
## GF Labeling and GF Certification

### When Is a Food Considered GF?

The FDA considers a food to be GF and safe for someone with celiac disease when it contains less than 20 parts per million (ppm) gluten. If a food is labeled GF, then it is required to contain less than 20 ppm gluten. GF labeling is voluntary; food manufacturers are not required to disclose gluten on the label or indicate if a food is GF. Also, the FDA does not require the use of a specific GF label. <sup>1</sup>

### What about GF certification?

Some manufacturers choose to certify their food products as GF. This means they have to follow the rules and protocols of a certifying organization. There are several different certifying organizations on the market. They are all private non-governmental organizations and vary in their requirements, but they have to at least follow the FDA regulation of containing less than 20 ppm gluten (see above).



## Allergens on the Label

### Allergen Statements on the Label

Food manufacturers are required to list WHEAT as an allergen on the label. This applies to any food regulated by the FDA.

**Wheat will be declared on the label in one of two ways:**

- (1) In parenthesis following the ingredient containing the allergen within the ingredient listing.

**Example:** Enriched flour (wheat) OR

- (2) In a "contains" statement following the ingredient listing.

**Example: CONTAINS WHEAT**

## Does Wheat Free Always Mean Gluten Free (GF)?

**No. Wheat-free does not always mean GF! Barley/malt, and rye are not listed as allergens. Make sure to read the whole ingredient listing.** Rye would be listed as rye and would not be a hidden ingredient. However, note that barley can be a hidden ingredient. Instead of listing barley as an ingredient you may see one of the following:

- Malt
- Malt extracts
- Malt vinegar
- Malt syrup
- Malt flavoring
- Brewer's yeast



**The following ingredients may (rarely) be derived from barley:**

- Yeast extract
- Autolyzed yeast extract
- Brown rice syrup
- Smoke flavoring
- Natural flavoring

**Tip! Always check with the manufacturer if a product has any of these ingredients, unless the product is labeled GF.**

## **Wheat-Derived Ingredients That Are Considered Safe**

Some-wheat derived ingredients are safe on the GF diet due to gluten being removed in the processing.

**The following 6 ingredients are safe even if derived from wheat:**

- Citric acid
- Dextrose
- Glucose syrup
- Distilled alcohols
- Distilled vinegar
- Maltodextrin

## **Wheat Starch**

Wheat starch is not safe on the GF diet, unless it has been specifically processed to contain less than 20 ppm gluten. Some GF products contain a specific GF wheat starch that has been processed to contain less than 20 ppm gluten. These are considered safe to include in the GF diet. Note that these products must include the following statement on the label: **"The wheat has been processed to allow this food to meet the Food and Drug Administration's requirements for gluten-free foods."**



## Voluntary Allergen Advisory Statements: 4 Things to Know

1. Manufacturers may include voluntary allergen advisory statements. **Note:** These statements refer to processing procedures, not ingredients. See our three examples below.
2. Allergen advisory statements are voluntary and not regulated.
3. Regardless of statements, food manufacturers are required to follow good manufacturing practices and to have cleaning protocols in place.
4. Allergen advisory statements **are not the same** as allergen statements, which are regulated by the FDA and refer to ingredients. (see page 6)

### Examples of voluntary allergen advisory statements:

Made in the same facility as wheat.

Made on the same equipment as wheat

May contain wheat

### Notes on Allergen Advisory Statements

**Foods labeled GF with an allergen advisory statement:** They must contain less than 20 ppm regardless of cross-contact. This means that if a product is labeled GF, then it would have to contain less than 20 ppm and should be safe on the GF diet.<sup>5</sup>

**Foods NOT labeled GF with an allergen advisory statement:** Look for the following words in the ingredient listing: **wheat, rye, barley, malt, brewer's yeast, oats**. Avoid this product if any of those ingredients are present or it is a grain product.





## Products Falling Under U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Not all foods are regulated by the FDA and, therefore, some foods are not subject to FDA regulation.

**The following products are subject to USDA labeling:**

- Meats: beef, lamb, pork, poultry
- Eggs and egg products
- Processed foods containing more than 3% raw meat or 2% cooked meat or poultry. <sup>3</sup> This includes hot dogs, chicken nuggets and other processed meat products.

**USDA requirements:**

- All ingredients are required to be listed on the label by their common name.
- Any food labeled GF must contain less than 20 ppm gluten.
- USDA products are not required to disclose the major 9 allergens. For instance, ingredients like “starch” and “dextrin” may be from wheat, and they do not have to be disclosed.<sup>4</sup>

**Tip! Make sure to contact the manufacturer to inquire about the sources of starches and dextrin on any USDA foods unless they are labeled GF.**

## Medications

In rare instances, medications may contain gluten. It is recommended to always check both over-the-counter and prescription medications for ingredients. Starches and pregelatinized starch may be from wheat. Unfortunately, medications are not required to disclose allergens on the label. Therefore, it is important to find out the origin of any starches used in medications.



### Checking medications for gluten:

- Inform your physician and pharmacist that you need your medication to be GF.
- Check the pharmaceutical insert/ingredient listing of the medication for the inactive ingredients.
- Contact the pharmaceutical company and ask about ingredients.
- Check the website DailyMed for inactive ingredients of medications:  
<https://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/>

## Where Can I Find More Information about Food Labeling?

Questions & Answers: Gluten-Free Food Labeling Final Rule:

<https://www.fda.gov/food/food-labeling-nutrition/questions-and-answers-gluten-free-food-labeling-final-rule>

FDA Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Labeling Act of 2004, Questions and Answers:

<https://www.fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents/guidance-industry-questions-and-answers-regarding-food-allergen-labeling-edition-5>

FDA Medications and Gluten:

<https://www.fda.gov/drugs/ensuring-safe-use-medicine/medications-and-gluten>

Gluten Free Watchdog:

<https://www.glutenfreewatchdog.org/news/>

NCA Confusing Ingredients:

<https://nationalceliac.org/celiac-disease-resources/confusing-gluten-free-diet-ingredients/>



DailyMed:

<https://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/>

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