



Gluten Free Solutions for Your Facility

Making accurate food choices for all patients and patrons is critical, but this is especially true for those on a gluten free diet. People follow a gluten free diet for many reasons, but it is a necessity for people with celiac disease who are unable to digest gluten. Once thought to be relatively uncommon, celiac disease affects more than 3 million Americans – that’s about 1% of the population, making it one of the most common genetically based diseases. As a result, foodservice operators within healthcare are likely seeing an increased influx of patients and patrons wanting and needing more gluten free options at their facilities.

Fact: One out of every 133 people in the U.S. has celiac disease.

About Celiac Disease

Celiac Disease is an inherited autoimmune disease that affects the digestive process of the small intestine and is triggered by the consumption of gluten. For someone with Celiac Disease, eating gluten-containing foods causes damage to the lining of the small intestine. This damage makes it very difficult for the body to absorb nutrients from foods. Over time this damage can lead to malnourishment and possibly other complications. While there is no cure for celiac disease, the good news is that eating a gluten free diet is the best way to prevent further damage to the small intestine for these individuals. To stay well, people with celiac disease must avoid gluten for the rest of their lives. Eating even a small amount of gluten can damage the small intestine. The damage will occur in anyone with the disease, including people without noticeable symptoms.

About Gluten

Gluten is a protein naturally found in certain grains such as wheat, barley, rye, and some oats¹. Foods that are made with these grains also contain gluten – that includes foods like bagels, breads, cakes, cereals, cookies, crackers, pasta, pizza, and more.

Surprisingly, gluten can also be found in foods where you might not expect it. Thus, the best way to know if a food contains gluten is to read the ingredients label. You need to check labels often. Ingredients can change over time, so checking the ingredients label every time is the most accurate way to identify what is in a food or beverage product.

1. According to ADA Evidence Based Analysis Library and NEJM, 2004; 351: 2021-2022, studies suggest that pure oats that are not cross-contaminated with wheat, barley or rye consumed in moderation can be tolerated by most people with celiac disease. Check with your healthcare provider to find out if this is right for you.

Gluten Free Tips for Your Operation

- Urge your chefs and cooks to always read labels. Product ingredients are subject to change over time. Checking the ingredient listing every time is the most accurate way to identify what is in a food or beverage product.
- Prepare gluten free meals with clean, non-contaminated pans and utensils.
- Purchase a separate toaster for gluten-free breads, or use a toaster that can be cleaned between uses, or place aluminum foil on the rack to avoid contamination.
- Never assume a product is gluten free. When in doubt, avoid using it!
- Post lists of ingredients that include gluten in food preparation areas.
- Wheat free does not mean gluten free. Remember, gluten is in wheat, rye and barley malt. A product can be wheat-free but still contain malt or other forms of gluten.
- When cooking gluten free meals, double-up and freeze the dishes. Most of the work is in the preparation, so it is most efficient to prepare once and cook twice.
- Seek specialty information from credible sources. Work with your facilities' Registered Dietitians or nutrition staff on developing a well-balanced gluten free menu.