

After diagnosis, how can families identify products to avoid when they're starting a gluten free diet?

A registered dietitian can help you learn to identify and avoid foods and drinks that contain gluten when you shop, prepare foods at home, or eat out.

For example, when you shop and eat at home

- carefully read food labels to check for grains that contain gluten—such as wheat, barley, and rye—and ingredients or additives made from those grains.
- check for gluten free food labeling
- don't eat foods if you aren't sure whether they contain gluten. If possible, contact the company that makes the food or visit the company's website for more information.
- store and prepare your gluten-free foods separately from other family members' foods that contain gluten to prevent cross-contact.

One thing to know is that it's important to avoid gluten but also avoid cross contact. Cross-contact occurs when foods or products that contain gluten come into contact with gluten-free foods. Cross-contact can spread gluten to gluten-free foods, making the gluten-free foods unsafe for people with celiac disease to consume. Cross-contact can occur at any time, including when foods are grown, processed, stored, prepared, or served. Often times this requires families to have special cookware, knives, cutting boards, serving utensils, toaster, etc that are only used to prepare gluten free meals.

Do you have any tips on starting a gluten free diet and how to identify what foods are gluten free? This is where you can share the tips:

- Parents/Caregivers having a special shelf or cabinet that is just the person with Down Syndromes and have them pick the foods from that area.
- Have colored tape on foods in the home, green for gluten free foods and red for those with gluten.
- Teach how to look for ingredients with gluten in them, the gluten free label, or teach where the gluten free section at your grocery store is located.
- Make a sheet with different pictures of foods on it and put green squares around the gluten-free options and red around the options with gluten.
- Teach how to ask for gluten free options at restaurants.
- Teach how to say no to foods if they are not sure if they have gluten in them. "I can't have that because certain foods make me sick"

This seems like a big lifestyle change. Is it hard to find gluten free food options in stores and restaurants?

It is a big change. However, many foods, such as meat, fish, fruits, vegetables, rice, and potatoes, without additives or some seasonings, are naturally gluten-free. Flour made

from gluten-free foods, such as potatoes, rice, corn, soy, nuts, cassava, amaranth, quinoa, buckwheat, or beans are safe to eat.

Additionally, you can also buy packaged gluten-free foods, such as gluten-free types of baked goods, bread, and pasta. These foods are available from many grocery stores, restaurants, and at specialty food companies.

However, packaged gluten-free foods tend to cost more and can be higher in calories and sugar than the same foods that have gluten, and restaurants may charge more for gluten-free types of foods.

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