

Catering for someone with coeliac disease

What is coeliac disease?

Coeliac disease is a condition where the immune system attacks its own tissues when gluten is eaten. It's not an allergy or a food intolerance, it's an autoimmune disease. Coeliac disease affects about 1 in every 100 people, however, under diagnosis is a problem and research suggests that about 500,000 people have coeliac disease, but just don't about it¹.

In people with coeliac disease, eating gluten can damage the lining of the gut and reduce the absorption of nutrients from food. Symptoms of coeliac disease vary between people but often include tiredness, bloating, diarrhoea, nausea and unexpected weight loss. Gluten is a protein found in wheat, barley and rye. Oats can be contaminated with gluten so only oats labelled as 'gluten free' are suitable for someone with coeliac disease.

The only treatment for coeliac disease is to follow a gluten free diet for life. One of the main problems in following a gluten free diet, is eating something that contains gluten accidentally. This is often due to wheat flour being used to thicken foods such as in soups, gravy and sauces. If one of your residents with coeliac disease accidentally eats gluten, its likely they'll be unwell within a few hours.

When catering for residents following gluten free diets, you must always read the food labels on products to check if wheat, rye, barley or oats are listed within the ingredients list. If any of these are present, they will be emphasised, usually in bold, underlined and/or in italic font. If a product contains wheat, rye, barley or oats as an ingredient, then it is not suitable for a resident with coeliac disease.

If you are ever unsure if an ingredient is suitable for someone with coeliac disease, always check, never guess about allergen information



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Catering Tips

- Always wash hands thoroughly before handling gluten free foods
- Wipe surfaces thoroughly before preparing gluten free meals
- Consider changing chef whites before preparing gluten free meals
- Use trusted suppliers and look out for products labelled as 'gluten-free'
- Always check ingredients lists on products, avoid products that contain wheat, rye, barley or oats
- If you receive a product substitution from your supplier, don't assume the ingredients will be the same, always check the ingredients list, avoid products that contain wheat, rye, barley or oats
- Use naturally gluten free foods like plain meat/fish, eggs, milk, plain cheese & yogurt, rice, potatoes, vegetables, fruit, salad, pulses, beans, lentil, nuts, butter/spread and oils
- Ensure a variety of foods is offered to help provide a balanced diet for your residents
- Avoid cross-contamination with foods containing gluten
- Store gluten free foods above gluten containing foods in your store cupboard
- Use clean utensils and have dedicated preparation equipment when preparing gluten free meals
- If you deep fry gluten free foods, only do so in a thoroughly cleaned fryer with new oil or consider a dedicated gluten free fryer
- Use toaster bags for gluten free bread or consider a dedicated gluten free toaster
- Use separate butter/margarine tubs for gluten free meals as knives can easily transfer crumbs from gluten containing bread
- Gluten free products like bread and pasta can look very similar to gluten containing products so make sure you use clearly identifiable serving dishes

Further Information

Coeliac UK www.coeliac.org.uk

Coeliac UK online chef training www.coeliac.org.uk/food-businesses/caterers-and-restaurateurs/how-coeliac-uk-can-help/training-for-caterers/

References

1. Coeliac UK, about coeliac disease <https://www.coeliac.org.uk/information-and-support/coeliac-disease/about-coeliac-disease/>



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