

Eating Gluten-Free With WIC

What Is gluten?

Gluten is a protein found in grains such as:

- **Wheat** (including bulgur, couscous, durum, einkorn, emmer, farina, farro, graham, kamut, seitan, semolina, triticale, spelt, wheat bran, wheat germ, wheat flour, and wheat starch)
- **Barley**
- **Rye**
- **Malt**
- **Brewer's yeast**
- **Oats** (unless labeled as gluten-free)*
**Some people with celiac disease, wheat allergies, or gluten sensitivities cannot tolerate any oats, even if labeled as gluten-free.*

Who needs to avoid gluten?

People who are diagnosed with celiac disease, gluten intolerance or sensitivity, or wheat allergies.

Unless labeled as gluten-free, the following types of foods often contain gluten ingredients:

- Wheat flour
- Bread
- Pasta
- Crackers
- Cereals containing wheat, barley, or rye
- Baked goods like cakes, cookies, and pastries
- Flour tortillas
- Breaded and fried foods
- Seasonings and sauces

There are several gluten-free versions of popular products available. But gluten-free labeling is voluntary; this means that a company can choose to include the gluten-free claim if they meet the standards below, but they do not have to include it.

Per Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations, if a product is labeled gluten-free:

- It cannot have any gluten-containing grains in the ingredients.
- It cannot be derived from a gluten-containing grain that has been processed to remove gluten.
- It cannot contain greater than 20 parts per million (ppm) of gluten.

FDA requires packages to list **“wheat”** in the **ingredients list** or in a **“contains” statement** (i.e., “contains wheat”). But as you know, **wheat is not the only source of gluten!** This is why it is important for people who need a gluten-free diet to always read ingredient lists in full to look for any potential gluten containing ingredients.

Some manufacturers choose to add **“may contain”** or **“produced in a facility”** statements; these are **voluntary statements**. Manufacturers may use the same equipment or share a facility with wheat and gluten-containing products in processing and choose to alert consumers through these claims. These statements do not mean that the food contains gluten, but the manufacturer is letting you know that it **may** contain trace amounts unintentionally. Remember, these are voluntary claims; they are not required to be included on labels. When in doubt, it may be best to avoid.

Luckily, many delicious and nutritious foods are naturally gluten-free.*

These include but are not limited to:

- **Fruits and Vegetables** (fresh, frozen, or canned)
- **Protein Foods** (beans, lentils, eggs, meat, poultry, fish, nuts, seeds, nut/seed butters, etc.)
- **Dairy Foods** (milk, cheese, yogurt, cottage cheese, etc.)
- **Gluten-Free Grains and Starches**
 - Rice
 - Corn
 - Potatoes
 - Quinoa
 - Gluten-free oats (if tolerated)
 - Millet
 - Amaranth
 - Sorghum
 - Teff
 - Buckwheat
 - Gluten-free breads, pastas, cereals, crackers, snacks, baked goods[^]

****Even though these foods are naturally gluten-free, it is always important to read ingredient lists on packaged products to be sure there aren't any hidden sources of gluten added in spices, sauces, or flavorings.***

[^]Look for gluten-free products that are also labeled as "whole grain" when possible. Many gluten-free products are lower in fiber and nutrients (like B vitamins, folate, iron, and magnesium) compared to the regular gluten-containing versions. Make sure to include a variety of foods from all the food groups to help meet your nutrition needs on a gluten-free diet and talk to your doctor or WIC nutritionist about the potential need for supplements.

Great News: Many WIC Foods are also Gluten-Free!

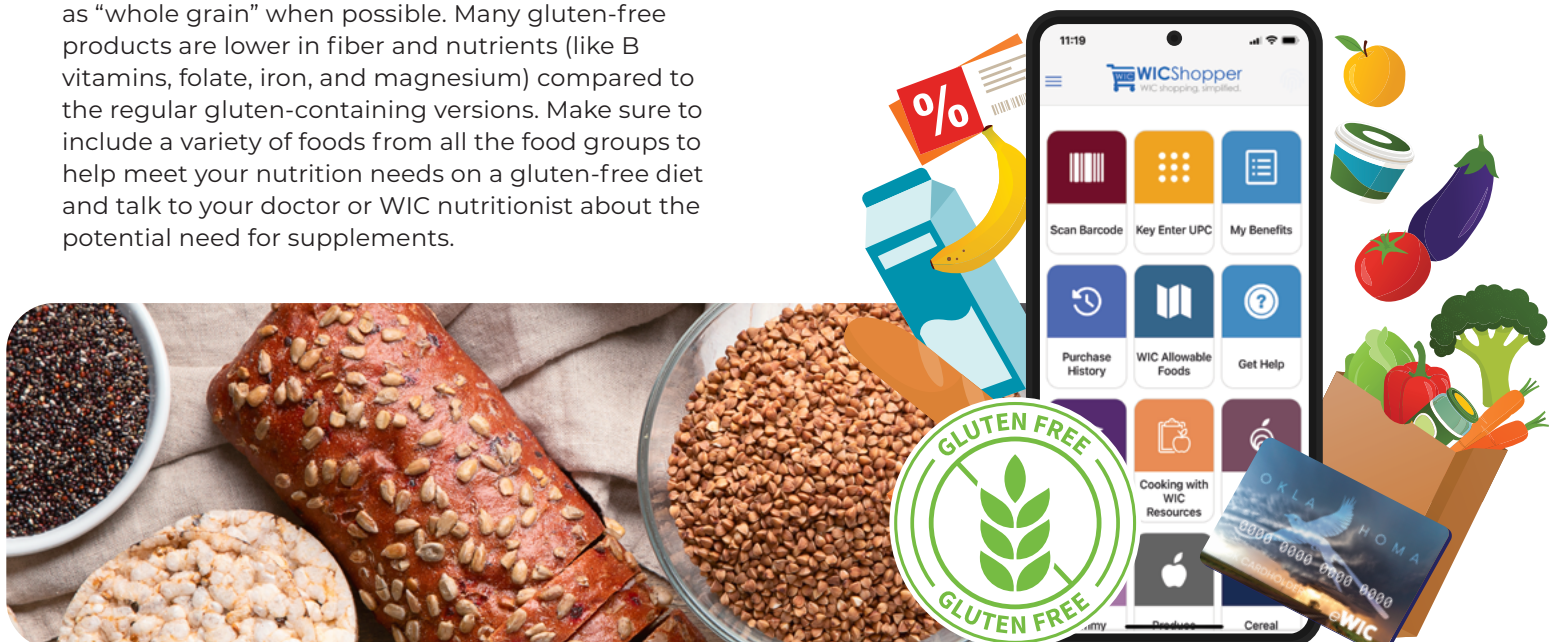
WIC-approved foods in the following categories are gluten-free:

- Fruits and vegetables
- Milk, cheese, yogurt, and tofu
- Eggs
- Canned fish
- Beans, peas, and lentils
- Peanut butter, almond butter, and sunflower butter
- Whole grains: rice (brown or wild), quinoa, corn tortillas, corn masa, gluten-free oats, buckwheat, amaranth, and teff
- Select gluten-free cereals and oats

It is important to always read labels on any packaged product to be sure it is gluten-free. Manufacturers can change product formulations without warning; verify items are gluten-free every time you buy!

Tips for Gluten-Free Shopping with WIC:

- Review our [WIC Approved Food List](#) on the WIC Shopper App.
- Look for products labeled "gluten-free."
- Read ingredient lists.
- Ask your WIC nutritionist for help finding gluten-free options.



Avoid Cross-Contact.

If you also prepare gluten-containing foods in your home, there are steps you should take to avoid cross-contact for family members who need to be gluten-free.

- Wash hands and surfaces frequently and thoroughly with soap and water, especially if preparing gluten-containing and gluten-free foods in the same space.
- Use separate cutting boards, knives, and utensils while cooking or thoroughly wash between uses.
- Thoroughly clean all cookware, bakeware, strainers, grills, food storage containers, etc. between uses.
- Do not share cooking water, cooking oil, or fryers with gluten-containing foods.
- After handwashing, run items through the dishwasher when possible.
- Consider using separate toasters.
- Avoid “double dipping” or sharing between gluten-containing and gluten-free items (ex: avoid putting knives back in butter after spreading on bread).



Need More Help?

Contact your local WIC clinic to learn about approved foods and gluten-free options. Your WIC nutritionist can help you read labels and choose foods to meet your family's needs!

Resources:

Celiac Disease Foundation:
celiac.org

National Celiac Association:
nationalceliac.org

U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA):
fda.gov/food

Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE):
foodallergy.org



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