



# Living with Coeliac Disease

## *A practical guide to support you and your family*

If you or someone you love has been diagnosed with Coeliac Disease it can be an overwhelming time for your family. This guide aims to help give clarity on this next phase, confidence in the journey ahead and peace of mind in knowing that everything will be okay.

With sound knowledge, firm understanding and conscious action this can be an easier transition than you might think. This will be a life change that will require support from your friends, family and your healthcare practitioner but most importantly it will require you to believe in yourself, so remember...

*You are not alone. You can do this. You will be okay.*

# Signs and Symptoms of Coeliac Disease

**Most people think of Coeliac Disease as a condition of gluten intolerance. It is, however, so much more than this.**

It's actually an autoimmune disease, where the lining of the digestive system is damaged by white blood cells when the immune system detects gluten has been eaten. This causes chronic inflammation in the small intestine (redness, swelling, heat), and can also be present in the skin, joints, bones, thyroid, nervous system and reproductive organs. It's caused by a specific protein, called gliadin, that's present in wheat, and similar proteins in barley, rye and oat products, that the person with Coeliac Disease can have an immune response to.



This immune response can cause symptoms such as:

- Nausea
- Bloating
- Cramping
- Weight loss
- Diarrhoea
- Constipation
- Fatigue
- Flatulence
- Nutritional deficiencies such as Iron, Magnesium, Zinc, Vitamin D and Folate

Coeliac Disease is tricky to diagnose and can present itself quite differently in different people. Some people have no symptoms at all, with about **75% of people with Coeliac Disease in Australia don't even know they have it!**

There are other less typical symptoms of Coeliac Disease such as depression, anxiety, a feeling of 'goosebumps' on the skin when eating gluten, and in children there can be difficulty concentrating and behavioural issues. These inconsistent symptoms all contribute to the difficulty in diagnosing this condition that affects approximately 1% of Australians.



**The good news is that this condition doesn't require medications or surgery to manage. Excluding gluten from the diet is the recommended plan to manage Coeliac Disease for the long term.**

This is really important, as eating gluten can have serious health implications for people with Coeliac Disease. Health conditions such as:

- Anaemia
- Bowel cancer
- Lymphoma
- Liver disease
- Infertility
- Osteoporosis

The benefits of following a gluten free (GF) diet are that you can avoid the immediate symptoms of Coeliac Disease, as well as keeping you healthy for the long term, by reducing your chances of developing some of the more serious health complications that unfortunately are associated with poorly managed Coeliac Disease.

# Overcoming the Challenges of Coeliac Disease

When you've been told that you or one of your family members has been diagnosed with Coeliac Disease, it can be quite an overwhelming time. Overhauling the diet to be completely gluten free sounds like hard work. And initially it can be.

**It can help to focus on what you CAN eat, rather than dwelling on what you can't eat.**



There may be some initial nutritional deficiencies that need to be addressed in the newly diagnosed Coeliac. This will be guided by your healthcare professional, but some common deficiencies are Iron, Magnesium, Zinc, B Vitamins and Vitamin D. Intake of essential fatty acids may also need to be increased. All of these deficiencies can be addressed with a balanced GF diet. Nutritional supplements may be advised if the deficiencies are significant, especially if the disease has been undiagnosed for some time.

Probiotics may also be considered, particularly if gastrointestinal symptoms have been present, as this may have caused an imbalance in the healthy bacteria of the gut. Your healthcare professional can prescribe the right probiotic strain to meet your needs.

## Challenge One - Cross Contamination

Consider whether you'd like the whole household to be GF, or just the family member with Coeliac Disease. If other members of the household are choosing to eat gluten, then it's really important that they all know how to prevent cross contamination. For example, if a cutting board and knife is used to make sandwiches, then they need to be cleaned thoroughly before the GF food is handled with that same board and knife (or always prepare the GF food first, to avoid contamination with gluten). Toasters are an item that is rarely thought of, but to be strictly GF, have a separate toaster for GF bread, or use the grill to toast.

Food items that are likely to become cross contaminated include anything that might be spread on bread such as butter and jam. Have separate containers for these and clearly mark them as GF so that a knife that's been dragged across gluten bread isn't then used in the jam that the GF family member will be using. Any porous kitchen utensils (i.e. wooden) should be marked for use for gluten or gluten free and labelled as such. Have a think about your kitchen and look at where cross contamination might occur.



# Overcoming the Challenges of Coeliac Disease

## Challenge Two - Reading the Labels

Enjoying a whole foods diet is one of the easiest ways to avoid gluten. Fresh fruit, vegetables and whole proteins are GF. Buying packaged food requires some care, as there is hidden gluten in many products (such as soy sauce, vegemite, gravy powder, marinades, sausages, vegetarian meat substitutes, instant soups, frozen potato chips, and many other packaged products).

**Be strict about reading labels and become familiar with 'code words' for wheat, such as spelt, semolina, malt, triticale, farro, durum, brewer's yeast, kamut and there are many more.**

You will find that many products are now labelled as GF which makes life a whole lot easier when it comes to grocery shopping. There are also many products that are GF that don't have this specifically stated on them, so remember to check the ingredients so that you aren't excluding some of your favourite treats unnecessarily. You'll also find that you get to know what products suit your family which will also make shopping faster and easier.

## Challenge Three - Eating Out

Fortunately, eating out when you're GF has become easier for those with Coeliac Disease, as there is greater awareness in the community and most cafes and restaurants clearly state on their menus what the GF options are. It can also help to phone ahead when you are planning where to eat to make sure that the restaurant can cater for GF eating. If the staff aren't sure, stick to whole foods with no sauces/dressings. This can be in the form of simple foods such as salads, steamed vegetables (not fried, like chips), eggs and grilled meat (with no coatings such as batter or crumbs).

**The less the food is handled in the kitchen, the less likely it is to have exposure to gluten.**



# Overcoming the Challenges of Coeliac Disease

## Challenge Four - Kids eating Gluten Free

*Sometimes, it can be easier just to make the whole household GF, so that the child can feel safe that they can eat anything in the house, and also, you don't then have to worry about cross contamination. This can also help with a child who doesn't want to feel different to the rest of the family.*



If the house isn't totally gluten free, then educate other household members about the importance of keeping gluten items separate from GF items, whether they be food or utensils used to handle food. It can help to have a section of your pantry and fridge that are GF so that everyone knows where the GF food is.

Many recipes can be adapted to be GF, and sometimes it's as simple as substituting gluten free pasta in a spaghetti sauce. There are hundreds of great blogs with kid friendly GF recipes – just start searching and you'll find some favourites that your family will love.

When you have a GF child going to school, inform the school of your child's GF status, and explain to your child that they can't swap food with friends. If this is a big issue for your child, then pack some extra food in their lunch box that they can give to friends so they don't feel left out. Use Toast Bags for sleep overs/school camps, etc. These are little bags that cover the bread so it can be popped into a communal toaster and be toasted. These can be bought at some supermarkets or from the Coeliac Society.

# Lifestyle and Travel Tips

## for Coeliac Disease

### Lifestyle Tips

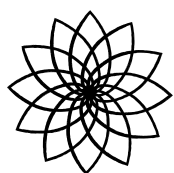
Since Coeliac Disease involves inflammation, it makes sense to introduce lifestyle measures to reduce the inflammation in your body. **Changing to a strictly GF diet is the first and most important step.**

Other suggestions include:



Regular exercise that you enjoy. This can be as simple as a daily walk around your neighbourhood. Setting a pace that makes it difficult to talk is a good guide to the intensity that this walk should be. It's great if you can walk with a friend or family member for motivation and relationship building.

High intensity exercise and weight training is also recommended for reducing stress and inflammation. Always check with your doctor before commencing any strenuous exercise program.



Yoga is proven to reduce inflammation and the stress response in people who regularly practice. Yoga can be practiced in a class environment, or there are many video classes available online.

Staying hydrated – drinking enough water is vital to maintaining good health. Aim for at least 1.5 litres per day. This includes herbal teas and non-caffeinated beverages.



Mindful eating – this means that you have your full attention on what you are eating, and you are savouring every mouthful. No television, no smartphones. Look at your food, smell it. Chew each mouthful thoroughly before swallowing. Have your attention fully focused on the meal that you are eating. This improves digestion and allows you to absorb more nutrients from your food.



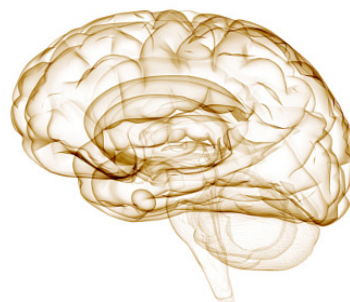
# Lifestyle and Travel Tips

## for Coeliac Disease

### Meditation

Meditation has its own section as there is much research underway that supports daily meditation to reduce stress, inflammation and improve brain health. Some studies have involved measuring cortisol levels in the body, which are an indicator of increased stress, and have shown that regular meditation reduces cortisol levels and other inflammatory markers.

There are also visible effects of meditation increasing the grey matter in the brain, measurable on an MRI scan, which is exciting many researchers. This improvement in brain structure is possibly why health benefits are seen in regular meditators.



**The best results have been seen in people who practice daily for around half an hour, however even just 15 minutes per day is very beneficial.**

Where meditation used to be very much in the 'alternative' domain, these days it has become mainstream. It's even being introduced into some schools and workplaces as it's been shown to improve productivity and concentration.

Here's an example of a simple body scan meditation:

1.

Find a comfortable seat, either on a chair or lounge, or on the floor. Close your eyes and take some time to settle, so that you aren't fidgeting.

2.

During this meditation time, resist the urge to scratch an itch, or to move the body in any way (unless you are in pain of course), as this provides distraction. You will find that as you regularly practice, these urges will disappear.

3.

Start to notice your breath. Observe and visualise your body breathing in and out, slow down your breathing, and allow it to naturally deepen.



# Lifestyle and Travel Tips

## for Coeliac Disease

4.

Start your body scan, relaxing each part of your body as you move through. Firstly, bring your attention to the crown of your head, and observe how it feels, and relax it. Slowly bring your focus to your forehead, and your left eye, your right eye, and so on through each part of your face, relaxing as you go. Then visualise your whole face as one. Move down to your neck and one shoulder, and continue down your arm. Move across to your other shoulder, and down your arm, visualising each individual part of your arm, hand and fingers. Next, move through the front of your torso, and down one leg, all the way through your knee and foot. Then start at the other leg, from the hip, and also work your way down the other leg.

5.

Finish the body scan with your back, and the back of the head, finishing back at the crown of your head. Then simply bring your attention back to your breath, coming in and out of your body.

6.

Use a timer (such as the one on your smartphone) so that you don't lose track of time, and you don't have to keep opening your eyes to look at a clock. Just focus on your breath until the time is up.

Start with just 5 minutes a day for the first week, and then increase it by 5 minutes every week, to the length of time that suits your lifestyle. Meditation can be done virtually anywhere – in the shower, on the train/bus, sitting in your lounge room, wherever you can find a short burst of time in fact. There's no need to feel limited by having to sit or be alone.

### Tip:

There are some great apps to keep you on track. Try 'Smiling Mind', a free Australian app that is designed for non-meditators to help them start to meditate.





# Lifestyle and Travel Tips

## for Coeliac Disease

### Travel Tips

- Stay in a self contained apartment so you can cook for yourself.
- If you're going somewhere where English isn't the first language, before you go, type the following into Google Translate:  
*"I need a strictly gluten free meal please. I may become very sick if I eat food that has had contact with wheat, rye, barley or oats. For example, please do not cook my gluten free pasta in water that has had gluten pasta in it, and don't use oil that has had wheat food fried in it such as anything crumbed. Please tell me if you can't guarantee this."*

Then print out multiple copies so you can hand it to the wait staff or even the chef so that it's clear what you need.

- There is a free app called 'Find Me Gluten Free' which lists businesses all over the world that serve gluten free food. This is great for travelling.
- Always carry some emergency GF snacks in your bag as a contingency, in case GF food simply isn't available to you during the day.
- Check out social media in the area that you're in. Searching hashtags for key words such as #glutenfreelondon or searching for local blogs can be really useful to find local GF eateries or grocery shops.
- Listen to your body. You may know the warning signs that you've eaten gluten, so tune in when eating new foods while travelling as this could be the difference between a small upset or a few days stuck in your hotel room.
- Pack your Toastbags as they can be used in restaurants or your hotel room toaster.

# Gluten Free Recipes

## for Coeliac Disease

These three healthy gluten free recipes are an example of the wide range of options available to people who have Coeliac Disease. There are endless options available that are absolutely delicious and will have your taste buds loving the gluten free life!

### Easy Cashew Balls:



#### Ingredients

- 2 cups raw unsalted cashews
- ¼ cup rice malt syrup
- 2 tablespoon coconut oil (melted)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 heaped tablespoon raw cacao powder
- A generous pinch of sea salt
- 2 teaspoon spirulina
- 1 heaped tablespoon tahini
- Sesame seeds

#### Method

Place the cashews in the blender and blitz to a fine powder. Place the cashew powder into a bowl and stir in the other ingredients.

Roll into balls, just smaller than tablespoon size is ideal and coat them with sesame seeds. Pop into the fridge for an hour to set. Then enjoy!

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.



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# Gluten Free Recipes for Coeliac Disease

## Yummy Gluten Free Pea and Zucchini Fritters:



### Ingredients (12 fritters = 4 serves)

- 2 large zucchinis (approx 500g)
- 1 good pinch sea salt
- 1 cup chopped flat leaf parsley
- ½ cup chopped fresh mint
- 4 chopped spring onions
- 6 medium button mushrooms
- 3 organic free range eggs
- ½ cup besan (chickpea) flour
- Zest from 1 lemon
- 1 cup peas (frozen or fresh)
- Ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 tablespoon olive oil

### Method

Grate the zucchini and place it in a colander in the sink. Add the pinch of sea salt and mix it through the zucchini gently with your hands. Leave the zucchini for 10 minutes while you prepare the other ingredients.

Chop the herbs, mushrooms and the spring onions finely and place into a large bowl with the peas, lemon zest and add the ground black pepper.

After the zucchini has had 10 minutes of sitting in the salt, get your freshly washed hands in there and squeeze out all of the liquid. As you squeeze out the fluid, pop each handful into the large bowl with the other ingredients.

Then add the lightly beaten eggs and the besan flour and mix it all together. The mixture will be moist but should hold together.

Heat a non-stick (preferred) frying pan with the olive oil over medium heat and use your hands to form the mixture into the first fritter. These fritters are quite soft but they should hold together well in the pan. You can add extra besan flour if you need to hold them together.

Cook these for about 2 minutes on each side or until golden brown.

Serve with a smashed avocado with organic feta, roasted cherry tomatoes, spinach, salsa, sweet chilli sauce, whatever you like really.



# Gluten Free Recipes for Coeliac Disease

## Mexican Burrito Bowls:



### Method

If you're using brown rice, start cooking it before you do anything else. If you're using quinoa, you can cook this while the veggies and bean mix are simmering.

Chop the onion, carrot, zucchini and capsicum into a ½cm dice.

Heat the oil in a large frying pan over a medium heat, and add all of the diced vegetables. Saute these until the onion and zucchini start to brown, then add the kidney beans, cumin and chilli flakes to the pan and stir. Then add the tinned tomatoes and stir them through.

Turn the heat down to a simmer for 15 minutes.

While this is simmering, prepare the fresh ingredients to serve, as above. When the rice/quinoa is cooked, place half a cup into the base of the individual serving bowl and layer half a cup of baby spinach leaves over it. Spoon a portion of the cooked bean mixture onto the spinach, and then layer fresh chopped tomato, avocado and lemon. Add salsa to taste. Sprinkle fresh coriander over the top and enjoy!

### Ingredients (for 2/3 serves)

- 1 tablespoon avocado oil
- 1 BPA free tin kidney beans drained and rinsed
- 1 BPA free tin of tomatoes
- 1 medium onion
- 1 large carrot
- 1 large zucchini
- ½ of a red capsicum
- ½ teaspoon cumin
- ½ teaspoon chilli flakes
- 2 cups of cooked brown rice or quinoa

### Fresh Add Ons To Serve

- 2 cups baby spinach leaves
- 1 fresh tomato, diced organic salsa
- 1 avocado, use a fork to smash it and mix with 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- Lime wedges
- 2 tablespoon coriander leaves, chopped