



# Celiac Disease - Seniors Living with Celiac

Canadian Celiac Association  
5170 Dixie Road, Suite 204, Mississauga, ON L4W 1E3  
tel: 905.507.6208, toll free: 1.800.363.7296  
web: [www.celiac.ca](http://www.celiac.ca) email: [info@celiac.ca](mailto:info@celiac.ca)

## Nutrition: Living GF

Follow a balanced diet to ensure you get enough nutrients for good health:

- Fresh fruits and vegetables are gluten-free.
- Milk and cheese, also gluten-free, provide calcium. If symptoms persist on a gluten-free diet, avoiding dairy products for a period of time may help.
- Meat and meat products can be prepared gluten-free.
- Breads and cereals are challenging, but many grocery stores and specialty food stores sell gluten-free breads and baked items.
- Watch for “hidden” gluten-containing ingredients in processed foods. Read ingredients in processed foods. Reading ingredient lists and phoning food manufacturers, when necessary, is essential to ensuring a 100% gluten-free diet. Consult a registered dietitian to develop a meal plan that works for you.

## Medication

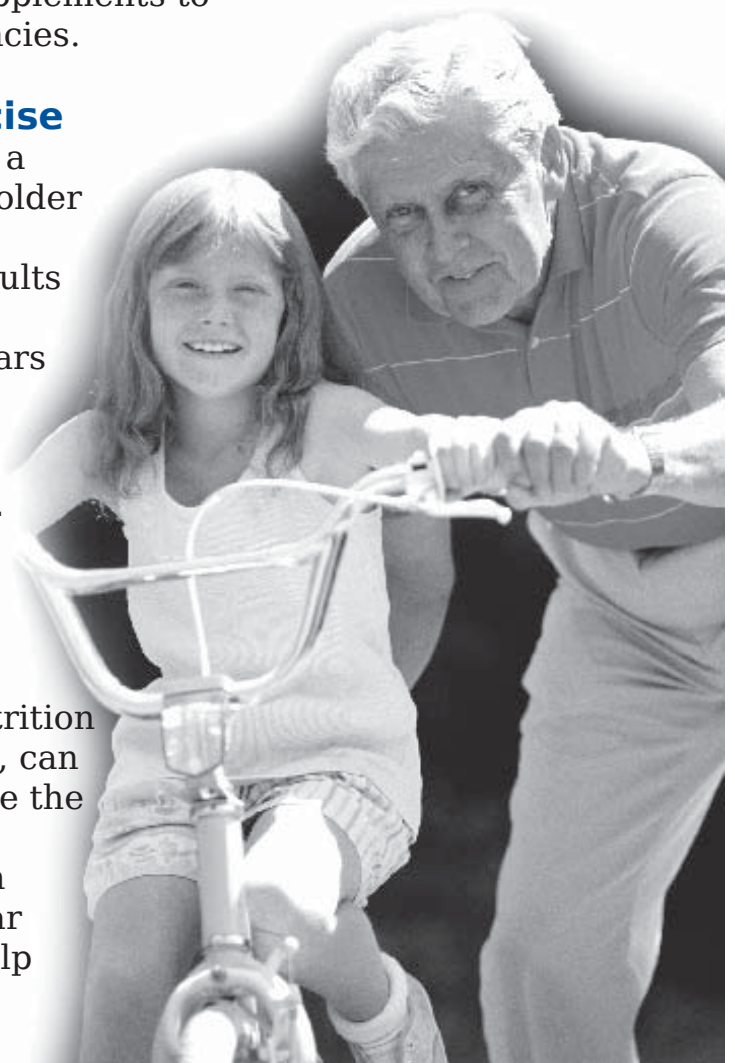
Not all medications are gluten free. Ask your pharmacist to refer to his/her CPS manual to determine whether your prescription drugs are gluten free. Before diagnosis, medications may not be properly absorbed. As you heal, medications may require adjustment by your doctor. Your doctor may also prescribe vitamin and mineral supplements to correct deficiencies.

## Exercise

Osteoporosis is a concern for all older persons, but especially in adults that may have experienced years of undiagnosed celiac disease. Make sure to ask your doctor to have your bone density checked. Exercise, along with proper nutrition and medication, can help to minimize the effects of osteoporosis. In addition, regular exercise will help you look and feel great.

## Travel

When travelling in Canada and abroad, plan ahead. Bring a supply of gluten-free food, if possible. Contact the local Canadian Celiac Association for information on where to shop and eat out. The CCA can provide contact information for foreign countries.



## Tips For Family & Caregivers

- Help is needed, especially right after diagnosis, to learn the complexities of the gluten-free diet. Support for newly diagnosed celiac patients is available from local chapters of the Canadian Celiac Association.
- Make sure all doctors know the diagnosis of celiac disease, and the importance of following a gluten-free diet.
- Help may be needed to read the fine print on food labels, and to question the server in restaurants. Check all foods for gluten content, especially “hidden” gluten, such as modified starch, and hydrolyzed plant protein.
- It is imperative that family and caregivers recognize the impact a change in diet can have on an older person, from both a nutritional and social perspective.
- Help by making sure gluten-free substitutes are on hand, eg. gluten-free communion wafers for church, and cookies or crackers for coffee and tea breaks.
- Encourage family members to be tested for celiac disease.

## An Overview of Celiac Disease

In celiac disease, the protein in wheat, barley, rye and oats\* damages the small intestine. This results in poor absorption of food and nutrients and leads to a variety of symptoms which may include - diarrhea, vomiting, bloating, fatigue, anemia, muscle weakness and/or irritability. The treatment is a 100% gluten-free diet for life.

\* Note: Small amounts of pure, uncontaminated oats are safe for those with celiac disease, however the availability of pure oats remains a problem. Most commercially available oats are contaminated with wheat or barley.

## Getting the Diagnosis

For years, celiac disease was considered a childhood disease. Now we know adults also have celiac disease, often suffering for years before being diagnosed. Diagnosis may be difficult because symptoms vary greatly from one person to another. If the doctor suspects celiac disease, a blood test should be ordered. If the results are positive, diagnosis should be confirmed using a small bowel biopsy. Older persons may require more time for the intestine to completely heal

## Related Conditions

Related conditions include: Type 1 diabetes, thyroid disease, osteoporosis, and others. Although the incidence of additional conditions is uncommon, advise your doctor of any medical concerns you may have.

## CCA Chapters

For more information on celiac disease, dermatitis herpetiformis, and the gluten-free diet, please contact the national office or the local chapters of the Canadian Celiac Association.

Vancouver	Hamilton
Victoria	Toronto
Kamloops	St. Catharines
Kelowna	Peterborough
Calgary	Belleville-
Edmonton	Quinte
Saskatoon	Kingston
Regina	Ottawa
Western	Quebec
Manitoba	Fredericton
Manitoba	Saint John
Thunder Bay	Moncton
Sudbury	Halifax
London	Charlottetown
Kitchener-	St. John's
Waterloo	

