

Eating without wheat

Why have I been given this information sheet?

You have been given this information sheet to help you identify if the symptoms you are having may be due to intolerance to wheat.

What is wheat intolerance?

Many people do not digest wheat completely. This often does not cause any symptoms or problems as the natural bacteria in your large bowel ferment the undigested starches in wheat. Wheat intolerance means that you may not fully digest wheat but this causes a reaction which can lead to symptoms including wind, stomach ache, bloating, altered bowel habit or a combination of these. If you are wheat intolerant these symptoms should get better once you are following a low wheat or wheat free diet.

How careful do I need to be?

Wheat intolerance is not the same as an allergy to wheat. This means you should be able to tolerate small amounts of wheat, unlike a wheat allergy when even the smallest amounts of wheat must be strictly avoided.

It is important to check with your doctor that you do not have coeliac disease (an auto-immune disease that means you react to the gluten found in wheat and other cereals) before excluding wheat. This is because the blood test used to diagnose coeliac disease needs wheat to be present in your diet for it to be accurate.

Where is wheat found?

Wheat is a grain. It is the main ingredient of many foods made from flour, such as: breads, breakfast cereals, biscuits, wafers and crackers, pasta, cakes and bakery goods, chapatti and naan breads, pizza, pastry and Yorkshire puddings. It is also found in many ready-made foods such as gravies and stock cubes, processed meat products such as sausages, sauces and convenience meals, flavourings and spices, including those found in crisps and coated potato chips or wedges.

Wheat must be clearly marked on the ingredients list of pre-packaged foods in bold type or highlighted. Foods sold without packaging such as in restaurants, cafes or delicatessens, do not have to be labelled, but any allergens (a food or other substance that may cause an allergic reaction) would have to be declared on request, either verbally or in writing.

Ingredients or foods to avoid

All the foods or ingredients listed below contain wheat so should therefore be avoided:

- **Breadcrumbs**
- **Bulgur wheat**
- **Couscous**
- **Durum wheat**
- **Flour/unbleached flour**
- **Kamut**
- **Rusk**
- **Semolina**
- **Spelt**
- **Triticale**
- **Wheat germ**
- **Wheat gluten**
- **Wheat malt**
- **Wheat starch**
- **Whole wheat**
- **Wheat bran**
- **Hydrolysed wheat protein.**

Are there any alternatives?

There are many foods that can be used as a substitute for wheat. It is important to use these to provide variety to your meals and help you get all the nutrients you require from your diet. Suitable alternatives include:

Grains	Amaranth; barley; buckwheat; corn/ maize; millet; oat; quinoa; rice and rye
Flours	Barley; buckwheat; corn; gram (chick pea); lentil; millet; oat; pea; potato; rice and soya
Flakes	Barley; buckwheat; millet; oat; rice and soya
Others	Ground nuts such as ground almonds; coconut; potatoes; polenta; sago; soya and tapioca

Wheat free manufactured products

There are now many wheat free products available to buy from supermarkets, health food shops and online. Do not assume all foods on the 'free from' aisle are wheat free, always check the packaging to ensure the product is wheat free.

Breads: There are a wide range of wheat free breads and rolls available, these can be more expensive. Wheat free crackers or crisp breads, rye crackers, oatcakes, corn cakes and rice cakes can also be used in place of bread for meals and snacks.

Batter and breadcrumbs: These are usually made from wheat flour. Suitable wheat free alternatives are available to purchase, but finely crushed cornflakes or crumbed wheat free bread make a good substitute for breadcrumbs.

Gravy: Wheat free stock cubes are available such as Kallo® or Knorr®. Corn flour can be used to thicken if needed. Some ready-made gravy granules have no wheat flour as an ingredient for example Bisto Best® or Orgran® 98% Fat Free Gravy Mix.

Pasta: Many wheat free pastas and noodles are available made from other grains such as corn, rice, buckwheat or quinoa. Take care not to overcook these as they will fall apart if cooked too long. Wholegrain versions of these can help to maintain a good fibre intake. Remember egg noodles are made using wheat, rice noodles however are suitable.

Sausages: These can contain rusk made from wheat but wheat free alternatives are now widely available in supermarkets, butchers shops and other meat producers. Suitable brands include: Black Farmer®, Debbie & Andrews™, Heck® as well as many supermarket own brands.

Soy sauce: This is used in Chinese and Thai dishes and is produced using wheat. Tamari sauce is a Japanese variety of soy sauce made without wheat so is suitable. There are many suitable brands of Tamari sauce available to purchase.

Beers and lagers: These are usually made from barley. However some beers are made from a mix of barley and wheat and some German beers are made from wheat. Check the can or bottle to see which grains are used.

Baking: Wheat free flours have a different consistency and baking properties to wheat flour but can make delicious breads, biscuits, cakes and pastry. Look on manufacturer's websites or call customer helplines for specific advice on using products. Wheat free baking powder is available from most large supermarkets and health food shops. Ready blended self-raising and plain wheat free flours are also available. Xanthan gum can be a useful ingredient to improve the texture of wheat free baked foods. You could also try a ready-to-roll wheat free pastry for example Schar® or Genius™ – these can be found in the frozen foods section of supermarkets.

There are many excellent wheat free recipe books now available, and many of the wheat free manufacturers listed in the information above will often have recipes using their products on their websites.

Can I ever eat foods containing wheat?

Follow the wheat free diet for 4 weeks only. Even if your symptoms have resolved, you may be able to re-introduce some wheat containing foods. You may find you tolerate small amounts of wheat eaten throughout the day better than a larger amount eaten in one go. If you do tolerate wheat, try small amounts initially, building up the amount until you reach the level that you can tolerate. If your symptoms return don't worry, they will go away when you return to the wheat-free diet.

If you see no change to your symptoms after 4 weeks on a wheat free diet, return to your normal diet and speak with your GP. If you are struggling to follow this advice, you avoid several other foods and are worried about ensuring you are getting enough nutrition in your diet, or would like further information, please ask your GP to refer you to a dietitian.

Further information

IBS Network

Website: www.theibsnetwork.org

Coeliac UK

Website: www.coeliac.org.uk

Allergy UK

Website: www.allergyuk.org

Food Standards Agency

Website: www.food.gov.uk/policy-advice/allergyintol/label/

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