

Is the gluten free diet the right choice for my child?

You may have heard that switching to a gluten free diet can help improve your child's health. However, he or she does not need to avoid gluten unless your doctor has done some tests and told you that your child has celiac disease. Many foods that have gluten are healthy choices for your child to eat.

This information will help you decide if avoiding gluten is the right choice for your child.

What is gluten and why is it important to avoid in celiac disease?

Gluten is a protein found in grains such as wheat, rye, and barley. Common foods that have gluten in them include breads, cereals, pastas, muffins, crackers, and baked goods.

In celiac disease, the lining of the small intestine is damaged by gluten. People who have celiac disease must avoid food with gluten to manage this rare disease.

If you think your child may have celiac disease, you need to see your doctor to have tests done. It is not recommended that you avoid gluten before you have these tests done as this can affect the results.

Are gluten free food products healthier than regular food products?

No. Just because a product is labelled “gluten free” does not mean that it is healthy. Gluten free products are often:

- lower in nutrients such as iron and B-vitamins
- lower in fibre
- higher in calories

Why does my child feel better on a gluten free diet?

Avoiding gluten may not be the reason your child feels better on this diet. Often people report “feeling better” while following a gluten free diet. There are often other reasons for this.

Your child may be:

- eating less processed foods
- having home-cooked foods more often
- including more fruits and vegetables

In general, your child may be “feeling better” by eating healthier, rather than from avoiding gluten.

Eating more healthy foods, such as fruit and veggies is something we encourage for everyone, not just people following a gluten free diet.

Do gluten free foods cost more money?

Yes, on average gluten free pastas and breads are 2 times the cost of wheat products.

Things about your child's nutrition to think about if choosing a gluten free diet

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates support your child's growth and brain function. They also give your child fuel so he or she has the energy to learn and play!

Did you know?

Many people think that a gluten free diet is a low carbohydrate diet. However, a gluten free diet and a low carbohydrate diet are two very different things! Gluten free food products also have carbohydrates.

Gluten free food products such as gluten free crackers or granola bars are made with refined grains. As a result, they have less fibre and act more like a simple sugar in your child's body. This can cause a rise in blood sugar and make your child feel even hungrier.

Some overweight children may have insulin resistance, pre-diabetes, or diabetes. This means that insulin is not working properly and sugar stays in the blood too long. Since many gluten free foods are low in fibre, it can be even harder for these children to stay at a healthy blood sugar level when following a gluten free diet.



It is important for you to read the Nutrition Facts Table to decide which foods are the best for your child.

Fibre

A gluten free diet can often be low in fibre.

A diet high in fibre is good for your child's health. Fibre can help your child to:

- prevent constipation
- feel full
- stay at a healthy weight
- slow down the rise in blood sugar
- lower cholesterol
- lower the risk of heart disease

Fibre is found in food such as:

- whole grains
- vegetables
- fruits
- beans
- nuts and seeds

How much fibre does your child need?

Age (years)	Boys (grams a day)	Girls (grams a day)
1 to 3	19	19
4 to 8	25	25
9 to 13	31	26
14 to 18	38	26

Check food labels in order to see how much fibre is in the foods your child eats regularly

What foods should my child eat less often?

The gluten free snacks listed below are low in fibre and may not help your child feel full. Some of these foods might even make your child **feel hungrier** after he or she eats them!

- potato chips
- rice crackers or rice cakes
- gluten free bread
- gluten free breakfast cereals
- store-bought gluten free muffins
- gluten free cookies, brownies, and macaroons
- gluten free granola bars

Iron

Iron is a mineral that helps carry oxygen to all parts of your child's body. It is important because it gives your child the energy to run, play and learn. Children also use iron during periods of rapid growth so it is important to get enough iron every day.

Children who do not get enough iron may become more selective with the foods they eat. They may choose less fruit and vegetables.

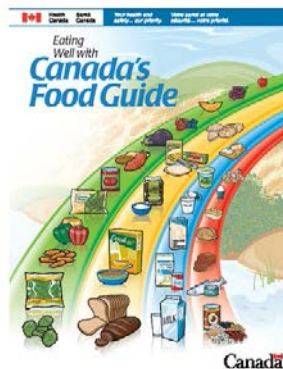
Children and teens that are overweight are two times more likely to have low iron stores than children of normal weight. For these children, going gluten free can lower iron stores even more!

If you and your child have decided to try a gluten free diet, it is important that your child gets iron from other sources such as beans, lentils, chicken, fish, and tofu.

B Vitamins

There are many different types of B vitamins. Together, they help make new blood cells, keep nerves healthy, and even help your child's body to use energy from the food he or she eats.

Unfortunately, most gluten free products do not have the same amount of vitamins and minerals as whole wheat breads and cereals. For children eating a gluten free diet, it is important to get B vitamins from other sources by eating a variety of foods from all 4 food groups from Canada's Food Guide.



Comparison of gluten free bread to wheat bread

Glutino Multigrain
Gluten Free Loaf

Nutrition Facts	
Per 2 slices (58 g)	
Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 160	
Fat 7 g	10%
Saturated 0.6 g	3%
Sodium 340 mg	14%
Carbohydrate 26 g	8%
Fibre 2 g	8%
Protein 2 g	
Calcium	0%
Iron	4%

Dempster's Original
100% Whole Wheat Bread

Nutrition Facts	
Per 2 slices (71 g)	
Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 170	
Fat 2 g	3%
Saturated 0.4 g	2%
Sodium 350 mg	15%
Carbohydrate 32 g	11%
Fibre 4 g	
Protein 7 g	
Calcium	4%
Iron	10%



Important
Information

The gluten free bread serving sizes are smaller than the whole wheat bread.

What is a healthy snack for my child?

Regardless of whether or not you decide to choose a gluten free diet for your child, one thing remains the same: fresh fruits and vegetables are always a healthy option and are naturally gluten free! Try some of these delicious snack ideas:

Apple peanut pizza

- 1 small apple
- 2 Tbsp of peanut butter
- 1 Tbsp of raisins, seeds or chopped walnuts

Core apple and slice crosswise. Spread with peanut butter and top with raisins, seeds, or chopped walnuts.

Yogurt parfait

- 1 yogurt cup
- ½ cup sliced strawberries or blueberries
- 1 Tbsp chopped walnuts



Layer yogurt and fruit and top with chopped walnuts for a delicious treat!

Fun fruit skewer

- ½ cup grapes or berries
- 1 oz. cheese, cubed

Place on a skewer and alternate between a few pieces of fruit with a piece of cheese for a healthy and yummy snack.



Rainbow veggie kebab

- Cherry tomatoes
- Carrot slices
- Yellow peppers
- Cucumber
- Radishes

Clean and chop equal amounts of each vegetable and slide vegetables onto a wooden skewer. These can be prepared ahead for a quick and easy snack. Try mixing it up with your favourite veggies, or adding some hummus for dip!

Green smoothie (3 servings)

- 1 ½ cups milk
- 1 cup spinach, lightly packed
- 1 banana, ripe
- ½ cup raspberries, fresh or frozen
- ½ cup blueberries, fresh or frozen
- 2 ice cubes



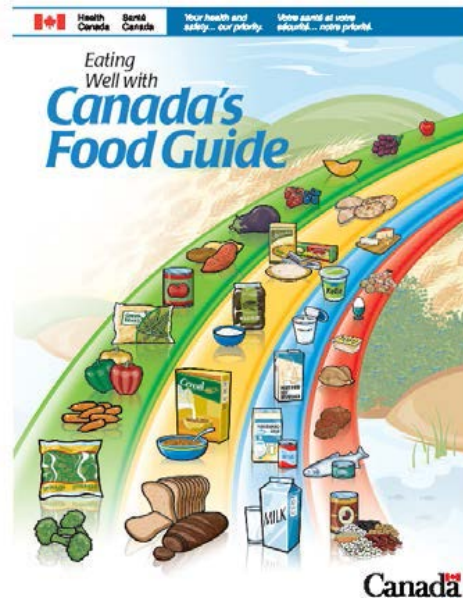
Blend until smooth. Pour into 3 glasses and serve.

What is the next step?

It is important to talk to your doctor and dietitian when deciding if a gluten free diet is the right choice for your child. If you do decide to choose a gluten free diet for your child, talk to your dietitian to make sure he or she is getting enough fibre, iron and B-vitamins.

For more information on how to include a variety of foods from all four food groups see Canada's Food Guide, which can be found at:

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/order-commander/index-eng.php>



Conversion:

1 cup = 250 ml, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup = 175 ml, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup = 125 ml, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup = 60 ml
1 tablespoon (Tbsp) = 15 ml, 1 teaspoon (tsp) = 5 ml
1 ounce (oz) = 30 grams