



**Royal Surrey  
County Hospital**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# **Wheat free diet**

**Nutrition & Dietetics Department**

**Patient information leaflet**

## **What is this leaflet about?**

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This leaflet is adapted from the British Dietetic Association Food Allergy Specialist Group (FASG) with permission and is for people of all ages who need to be on wheat free diet. It is not intended for people with coeliac disease and a separate leaflet is available from the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics at the Royal Surrey County Hospital.

## **What is wheat?**

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Wheat is a grain that is milled to make flour which is then used to make bread, pasta, pastry, cake, biscuits, etc. It is an important source of carbohydrate and contains nutrients such as fibre, B vitamins, calcium, iron and folate. It is therefore important to find suitable alternatives if you need to avoid wheat. This leaflet is written to help you do so.

## **What is the difference between wheat allergy and wheat intolerance?**

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A wheat free diet may be needed because you have wheat allergy or wheat intolerance.

Allergies involve an abnormal response from the immune system with a reaction occurring within minutes or several hours after eating or inhaling a specific food. These – immediate allergic reactions – can be life threatening and thus, the allergenic food should be strictly avoided.

A food intolerance does not involve the immune system and reaction is delayed occurring hours or days after eating the allergenic food.

## **How is wheat allergy/intolerance diagnosed?**

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Your doctor will ask questions about your symptoms and may perform some tests which will depend on the type of reactions you have.

For immediate reactions, skin prick test or blood test measuring specific IgE antibodies may be done. Occasionally a food challenge, where you will be gradually exposed to wheat, may be performed. This is done in a hospital setting.

For delayed reactions, the most reliable method is food exclusion and then re-introduction. A registered Dietitian will guide you on the process which involves eliminating the suspected food for a set period of time and then slowly re-introducing it and observing for tolerance.

## **What are the symptoms of wheat allergy/intolerance?**

- diarrhoea and/or constipation, urgency
- wind, bloating, stomach gurgling
- reflux, nausea or vomiting
- stomach pain
- itchy skin, rashes (redness or hives)
- eczema
- swelling of the face, eyes, lips or tongue
- itchy red watery eyes, sneezing or runny nose
- asthma symptoms with coughing or wheezing

## **How long do I need to follow a wheat-free diet?**

This will depend on why you need to avoid wheat. Your doctor or dietitian will advise you.

## **Can a wheat allergy/intolerance be outgrown?**

Wheat allergy developed at infancy tends to disappear within five years. Whereas, in adults it is more likely to be longer term. Wheat intolerance may only last a few months.

## **What about rye, barely, and oats?**

Rye and Barely are grains that contain similar proteins to wheat and may need to be avoided. Discuss with your doctor or dietitian.

Standard oats may contain trace amount of wheat and therefore, may need to be avoided and gluten free oats to be used instead. Discuss with your doctor or dietitian about which ones to have.

## Foods to avoid and suitable alternatives

Below are some examples of foods to avoid and suitable alternatives. This list is not exhaustive. **Always remember to check labels!** Wheat, among other common allergens must be labelled on the ingredients list by law in all EU countries and it is emphasized in bold or underlined.

### Grains, bread, rice, pasta, and other starch carbohydrates

Suitable foods	Foods that may contain wheat	Foods to avoid
Amaranth seed/flour/flakes, banana flour, bean flours, buckwheat flour/grain/flake, carob flour, chestnut flour, coconut flour/desiccated coconut, fava/ broad bean flour, flaxseed flour, fufu flour, gram/ chickpea/ garbanzo flour, hemp flour, lentil flour, maize/corn flour, corn meal, polenta, millet flour/grain/flakes, mustard seed/powder, nut flours e.g. almond/ hazelnut/ pecan, plantain flour, potato flour/ starch, quinoa flour/grain/ flakes, rice flour/flakes/ground, sago, sesame flour, sorghum flour, soya flour, sweet potato flour, tapioca flour/ grain, teff, yam flour	Baking powder, modified or hydrolysed starch, binders, thickeners, edible starch, cereal proteins	Bulgar wheat, couscous, durum wheat, einkorn, emmer, farola, kamut, malted wheat, semolina, spelt, triticale, whole wheat, wheat bran, wheat germ, freekeh

Suitable foods	Foods that may contain wheat	Foods to avoid
Bread made with the wheat free flours or ready-made wheat free products	Rusks or other baby biscuits/ snacks	Wheat breads (e.g. white, wholemeal, granary, soda bread), brioche, chapattis, croissants, crumpets, naan, pitta, tortillas, wraps. Yorkshire puddings, stuffing, batter, bread crumbs
Crackers/Crispbreads made with rice/corn/ buckwheat/tapioca		Cream crackers, bread sticks, crispbreads
Pastries made from wheat free flour		Pies, quiche, pasties, sausage rolls
Wheat free cereals. Other specialist cereals using buckwheat, rice, corn or millet flakes	Rice Krispie® and Corn flake cereals®	Wheat-based cereals and their supermarket versions, wheat bran/ germ
Dried or tinned wheat free pasta and noodles made from rice, corn, buckwheat or millet	Egg noodles	Dried or fresh wheat pasta, tinned spaghetti in tomato sauce, ready-made pasta meals. Dried, fresh or processed noodles
Wheat free pizzas/ pizza bases		Pizzas, pizza bases, dough balls
Plain boiled white/ brown rice	Savoury rice, ready-made rice dishes	
Potato flour, fresh baked/boiled/mashed potato	Instant mashed potato. Potato products e.g potato salad and frozen potato wedges/ chips/processed shapes/waffles	

## Dairy and alternatives, margarines and oils

Suitable foods	Foods that may contain wheat	Foods to avoid
Cow, goat, and sheep milks, condensed milk, evaporated milk, milk alternatives (e.g. soya, rice, pea, almond, coconut, hemp, quinoa milk), dried milk powders and coffee whiteners, fresh cream, dream topping, buttercream	Milk shakes, yoghurt, fromage frais, mousse, similar ready-made puddings that may be thickened with wheat starch or contain cereal grains, tinned milk puddings, ice cream, synthetic cream	
Hard and soft cheese including cheddar, cottage cheese, halloumi, feta	Processed cheese and cheese spreads, cheese sauce	
Butter, margarine, ghee, lard, paneer, oils (e.g. sunflower, corn, rapeseed, safflower, olive, and nut oils)	Some low fat margarines, suet, margarine containing wheat germ oil	

## Fruits and vegetables

Suitable foods	Foods that may contain wheat	Foods to avoid
All plain fruit and vegetables (fresh, frozen, dried and tinned), vegetable crisps	Fruit pie fillings, dried fruit bars, pre-packed vegetables for roasting, roast parsnips/potatoes etc., vegetables in sauces, mayonnaise, salad creams, vegetable salads, coleslaw	Fruit crumble/pies/fritters, fresh, frozen and tinned vegetables in batter, breadcrumbs (e.g. fried mushrooms, onion rings, cauliflower cheese, stir fried vegetables)

## Meat, fish, eggs, beans, nuts

Suitable foods	Foods that may contain wheat	Foods to avoid
All unprocessed meats (beef, pork, lamb), poultry (chicken, turkey, duck), wheat free sausages.	Processed meats e.g. sausages, beef/lamb burgers, tinned meat, haggis, black pudding, meat paste or paté.	Meat in pastry (pasties, pies, sausage rolls), meat in breadcrumbs, batter or cooked in beer
Plain fish (tinned, fresh or frozen eg. tuna, mackerel, cod, plaice), wheat free fish fingers	Fish paste, paté	Processed fish e.g. fish in batter or breadcrumbs, fish fingers, (unless known to be wheat free)
Plain eggs		Scotch eggs, quiche, French toast/eggy bread
Fresh, dried, frozen and tinned beans e.g. baked beans, butter beans, kidney beans, soya beans, chickpeas, lentils, textured vegetable protein, hydrolysed vegetable protein, tofu, hummus	Pulses in sauces e.g. baked beans	
Plain nuts and nut butters	Roasted/flavoured nuts	
	Ready meals or baby foods, vegetarian paté, cutlets, sausages, burgers, mince and ready meals made from Quorn®, soya and other meat substitutes	

## Miscellaneous

Suitable foods	Foods that may contain wheat	Foods to avoid
<p>Pepper, salt, herbs, vinegar, Tamari® (Japanese) soy sauce, wheat free gravy, jam, marmalade, syrup, honey, sugar, vanilla essence, wheat free baking powder, xanthan gum, bicarbonate of soda, tartaric acid, gelatine, yeast, arrowroot, glucose syrups made from wheat, wheat derived maltodextrin, dextrose, monosodium glutamate</p>	<p>Tinned and packet soups, cooking sauces, sauce mixes, chutneys, salad dressings, salad cream, mayonnaise, mustard, ketchup and other sauces, stock cubes, gravy mixes, miso, mixed spices and seasonings</p>	<p>Bread sauce, soya sauce, stuffing mixes, baking powder, foods containing wheat protein isolates</p>
<p>Meringues and flourless cakes, branded wheat/gluten free cakes, homemade or shop-bought wheat/gluten free desserts (e.g. jelly, meringue, sago, tapioca, rice pudding, blancmange), custard powder</p>	<p>Florentines, macarons, marzipan, cake decorations.</p>	<p>Muffins, scones, pastries, pancakes, Chelsea/hot cross buns, doughnuts, all cakes and biscuits made with wheat flour, semolina, crumbles, pastries, flans, tarts, cheesecake, sponges, éclairs, steamed/ suet puddings, trifle, soufflé, mousse.</p>
<p>Plain/unflavoured crisps, pop-corn, tortilla chips and other plain wheat free corn or rice-based snacks, wheat/gluten free cereal bars</p>	<p>Prawn crackers, pakoras, Bombay mix and other Indian snacks, flavoured crisps</p>	<p>Pretzels, Japanese rice crackers.</p>

Suitable foods	Foods that may contain wheat	Foods to avoid
Plain fruit juice iced lollies, wheat/gluten free cones	Sorbets, ice creams, coated ice lollies	Ice cream cones and wafers
Chocolate, boiled sweets, chews, mints, chewing gum, fudge, toffee, seaside rock, marshmallows, chewy sweets	Custards	
Water, fruit juice, squash fizzy drinks, pure cocoa powder,	Cloudy old fashioned lemonade, milkshakes and milkshake powders, hot chocolate, malted drinks	Lemon/orange barley drinks
Cider, wine, sherry, port, brandy, rum, malt whisky, martini	Vodka, gin, liqueurs, blended whisky	Ale, stout, beers, lager (including low-alcohol and home brew)

## Medication and supplements

Always check labels, including prescribed medication as they may contain wheat – discuss with your doctor or pharmacist.

## Things to keep in mind!

- “Gluten free” does not always mean “wheat free”. Some products labelled “gluten free” contain wheat starch that has been modified to reduce the gluten content. Choose products that are labelled “wheat free” or “gluten and wheat free”.
- Labelling laws outside the EU differ and may not always list wheat, rye, barley, and oats as an ingredient so do not forget to check the ingredients carefully.

- Cross contamination introduces traces of the allergen which may need to be avoided. Always ensure that work surfaces, chopping boards, cooking utensils and crockery are thoroughly cleaned. Use separate toaster or toaster bags, cooking equipment, and containers for jams, butters, spreads, chutneys, etc.
- Barley malt extract is found in many breakfast cereals including those that are rice or corn based, and does not contain wheat.
- Codex wheat starch is wheat with the majority of gluten removed. It should be avoided when on a wheat free diet.

## **Tips for eating out and travelling**

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- Check out the restaurant's website or call in advance to check if they can cater to your needs.
- Avoid busy meal times so the staff can be more attentive and check ingredients properly if needed.
- Sauces and gravies may contain ingredients which are not always remembered by the staff.
- Be aware of cross contamination at self-service areas.
- Discuss your needs with the host in advance when eating at family, friends or parties. It may be helpful to take wheat free foods with you.
- Make sure you know the words for wheat in the local language so you are able to read food labels and explain in restaurants. There are translation services available on line to help you with this preparation. For example: [www.yellowcross.co.uk](http://www.yellowcross.co.uk)
- It is wise to inform your airline before flying particularly if you are expecting them to provide you with food.

## Cooking tips

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- Xanthan gum is a useful ingredient to add to wheat free baking to improve texture.
- Blended wheat/gluten free flours, ready mixed with xanthan gum or raising agents are available.
- Wheat/gluten free pastry works best with rice, soya, potato or polenta flour. A rice and potato flour combination is fine and very absorbent and holds the liquid making it less crumbly. Adding egg also helps it to hold together. Ready-made gluten free pastries are also available.
- Potato flour or cornflour are good alternatives to wheat flour for thickening sauces.
- Quinoa is a wheat/gluten free and extremely nutritious high protein grain. It also contains the essential fats omega 3, 6 and 9. Red quinoa is the wholemeal version so needs to cook for longer.
- Try finely crushed cornflakes as an alternative to breadcrumbs. Wheat free bread crumbs and batter mixes are also available.

## Useful websites for recipes

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- [www.glutenfreegoddess.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.glutenfreegoddess.blogspot.co.uk)
- [www.alimentarybites.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.alimentarybites.blogspot.co.uk)
- [www.intolerantgourmand.com](http://www.intolerantgourmand.com)
- [www.freefromfairy.com](http://www.freefromfairy.com)
- [www.foodsmatter.com/freefrom\\_recipes](http://www.foodsmatter.com/freefrom_recipes)
- [www.bbcgoodfood.com](http://www.bbcgoodfood.com)
- [www.wheat-free.org](http://www.wheat-free.org)
- [www.glutenfreecupatea.co.uk](http://www.glutenfreecupatea.co.uk)

## Key reference sources and further information

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- British Dietetic Association Food Allergy Specialist Group. Wheat Free Diet.
- PEN. Wheat – A Priority Food Allergen. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-nutrition/reports-publications/food-safety/wheat-priority-food-allergen.html>
- SpoonGuru and FoodMaestro are smartphone applications available on Apple and android devices. They are useful to bar code scan food labels to check suitability on a restricted diet.
- [www.bbcgoodfood.com](http://www.bbcgoodfood.com): Spotlight on wheat free
- [www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well): Should you cut out bread to stop bloating
- British Dietetic Association Food Facts: Eating without wheat

If you feel you need further assessment or advice please ask your GP or consultant to refer you to a registered Dietitian.

This leaflet is produced by the Dietetic departments at Royal Surrey County Hospital, NHS Foundation Trust. It is not a substitute for dietary advice given to a specific individual by a dietitian. If you need to see a dietitian, ask your GP or consultant for a referral.

Please note that the information in this leaflet was correct at time of writing. The ingredients of manufactured products can change.

If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet please contact the dietetic department, details on back cover.





## Dietetic Department contact details

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If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet please contact the Dietetic Department at the address below:

### **Nutrition & Dietetics Department**

Royal Surrey County Hospital, Egerton Road, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 7XX.

**Switchboard telephone:** 01483 571122 **ext** 4202

**Telephone:** 01483 464119

**Fax:** 01483 464868

**Email:** [rsch.dietitians@nhs.net](mailto:rsch.dietitians@nhs.net)

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## PALS and Advocacy contact details

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Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

**Telephone:** 01483 402757

**Email:** [rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net)

**Opening hours:** 9.00am–3.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

Past review date: N/A

Future review date: January 2022

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**PIN190122–1618**

