

## What is Celiac Disease?

Celiac disease is a serious genetic autoimmune disease that damages the villi of the small intestine and interferes with absorption of nutrients from food. Celiac disease is triggered by consumption of the protein called gluten, which is found in wheat, barley and rye.

It was once believed that only children have celiac disease. However, this is not true. Celiac disease affects men, women and children of all ages and races. Roughly one out of every 133 Americans has celiac disease, but 83% remain undiagnosed or misdiagnosed. Left untreated, people with celiac disease can develop further complications such as other autoimmune diseases, osteoporosis, thyroid disease, and even certain cancers.

## What is the Treatment for Celiac Disease?

Currently, the only treatment for celiac disease is a 100% lifelong gluten-free diet, which eliminates the gluten protein found in wheat, barley and rye. Gluten can be found in many foods, cosmetics and even medication.

## Gluten in Medication

Gluten can be used in the excipients of medication. Excipients are the binders that hold medicine together. It is important that people with celiac disease work with their doctor or pharmacist to make sure their medications are gluten-free. The manufacturer should also be able to help you determine if the medication you will be taking is gluten-free or if it is not safe for people with celiac disease.

## The Problem with Gluten in Medication

- There are currently **no** requirements for labeling gluten or common allergens found in drug ingredients
- There are **no** specific precautions for individuals with celiac disease in labeling
- Potential sources of gluten in medications are not well-recognized by healthcare professionals
- Generic drugs may use different binders than name brand drugs

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## Starches Found in Medications

The following inactive ingredients are considered “red flags,” as they may be sourced from wheat, barley or rye. If you see a red flag ingredient, it means that more information is needed to find out if the drug’s ingredients contain gluten. Some ingredients are more obvious than others.

- Wheat
- Modified starch (if source is not specified)
- Pregelatinized starch (if source is not specified)
- Pregelatinized modified starch (if source is not specified)
- Dextrates (if source is not specified)
- Dextrin (if source is not specified; the source is usually corn or potato which is acceptable)
- Dextrimaltose (when barley malt is used)
- Caramel coloring (when barley malt is used)

## How to Get Answers

Getting answers about gluten in your medication can be challenging. Your best sources of information are your physician, pharmacist and the drug manufacturer. There are some lists available online, however, **it is extremely important that you double check any claims found on the internet** with those mentioned above to be sure that your medication is truly gluten-free.

For help getting started, you can access a free drug list at [www.GlutenFreeDrugs.com](http://www.GlutenFreeDrugs.com).

For answers to frequently asked questions and more, visit [www.BeyondCeliac.org/GlutenInMeds](http://www.BeyondCeliac.org/GlutenInMeds)