



Associated conditions

Coeliac disease and Type 1 diabetes

How common is it to have both conditions?

Coeliac disease is more common in people who have Type 1 diabetes because both are autoimmune diseases. For most people, Type 1 diabetes is diagnosed before coeliac disease, although it can happen the other way around as well. People with Type 1 diabetes are at a higher risk than the general population of having coeliac disease. Between 4% and 9% of people with Type 1 diabetes also have a diagnosis of coeliac disease compared with 1% of the general population.

What if I have no symptoms?

Some people with Type 1 diabetes appear to have mild or no obvious symptoms of coeliac disease, but their gut lining will still be damaged when they eat gluten. The only treatment for coeliac disease is to follow a strict gluten-free diet.

How does coeliac disease affect my diabetes?

Your blood glucose control may change after you start your gluten-free diet. This can happen because taking gluten out of your diet allows the lining of your gut to heal so absorption of nutrients, including carbohydrate, will improve. You may need to keep a closer eye on your blood glucose levels. If you are concerned, talk to your diabetes team about your insulin requirements.

Ten top diet tips for managing both conditions

1. Eat three meals a day

Eat breakfast, lunch and dinner and try not to skip meals. This will help control your appetite and your blood glucose levels.

2. Include gluten-free starchy carbohydrate foods at each meal

- gluten-free breads (especially multigrain or seeded varieties), pasta and crackers
- naturally gluten-free grains such as rice, rice noodles, polenta (cornmeal), buckwheat, millet and quinoa
- starchy vegetables such as new potatoes, sweet potatoes, yams, cassava (tapioca) and plantains
- gluten-free breakfast cereals such as buckwheat flakes and muesli.

Carbohydrate is important to control your blood glucose levels. The amount you need to eat depends on your age, weight and how active you are.

3. Cut down on the amount of fat you eat, particularly saturated fats

Fat is the greatest source of calories, so eating less will help you maintain a healthy weight:

- use less saturated fat by cutting down on butter, margarine and fatty meats
- choose lower fat dairy foods such as semi skimmed milk, low fat yoghurts (avoid those with fibre), reduced fat cheese and lower fat spreads
- grill, steam or oven bake instead of frying or cooking with oil or other fats.



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4. Eat more fish

All plain fish is naturally gluten-free. Oily fish such as mackerel, sardines and salmon are high in omega-3 fats which may help prevent heart disease. Talk to your healthcare professional about how much you should eat.

5. Limit sugar and sugary foods

Sugar is not forbidden when you have diabetes, but constantly having foods and drinks that are high in sugar does not help to control your blood glucose.

Choosing sugar-free, no added sugar or diet squashes and fizzy drinks can be an easy way to reduce the sugar in your diet.

6. Reduce salt in your diet

Adults should aim to have 6g or less of salt each day, children should have less and recommended maximum amounts of salt vary depending on age. More than this can raise blood pressure, which can lead to stroke and heart disease. Reduce the amount of processed foods you eat as these can be high in salt.

Try flavouring foods with herbs, spices and pepper which are all gluten-free.

7. Eat more fruit and vegetables

All fresh, frozen, canned, juiced and dried fruits are naturally gluten-free. Aim to eat at least five portions a day.

8. Include more pulses

Peas, beans and lentils are naturally gluten-free. Try adding them to stews, soups, curries and salads.

9. Drink alcohol in moderation

Wine, spirits, cider, sherry, port, liqueurs and gluten-free beers can all be included in a gluten-free diet. You need to avoid beers, lagers, stouts and ales. Remember alcohol can add extra calories. Never drink on an empty stomach as alcohol can increase your chances of hypoglycaemia (low blood glucose levels) if you are taking certain diabetes medication and/or insulin.

10. Avoid diabetic food and drinks

Diabetic foods have not been recommended in the treatment for people with diabetes since the 1980s. These are often expensive, contain just as much fat and calories as ordinary versions and can have a laxative effect.

This information is for guidance only and should not replace advice given by your healthcare professional.

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