

LIVING
COELIAC SAFE
IN THE
WORKPLACE
TOOLKIT
2021

*GF
for life*



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Coeliac Disease in the Workplace

– How to Start the Conversation

Talk to your manager and educate them on coeliac disease and how it affects you in the workplace. If your employer knows that you have coeliac disease, you should be able to work in a safe and comfortable environment. They need to be made aware of your reactions to gluten and their obligation to accommodate your needs. Most managers will help meet your needs, including regular toilet breaks, space in the staff kitchen and fridge for gluten free safe food and more understanding if you have been glutened.

This may include:

- Provision of safe food in the workplace
- Staff education about coeliac disease and how to prevent cross contamination
- Permission to bring your own gluten free food to the workplace
- Your right to gluten free options
- How to prevent cross contamination and risk minimisation strategies
- Reasonable accommodation for restroom breaks
- Workplace food service offers gluten free option to their staff
- Managing coeliac disease in the corporate world

Celebrations and Work Shouts

Many workplaces host work shouts, shared lunches, and celebrations. The only challenge is that someone with coeliac disease is less likely to participate in these staff events because they don't know how the food was prepared, what ingredients were used, and most importantly whether it contains gluten. Lack of participation in group activities can create a sense of isolation and can be stressful.

- Education sessions: Don't be scared to open the conversation with your team about coeliac disease. It's always helpful for everyone to be educated about it and ask questions.
- Inform your colleagues: The next time there is a celebratory event at work, where food is brought in by others. If it's catered ensure the caterer is able to provide coeliac safe gluten free options.
- Ask employers/managers to inform staff with coeliac disease where possible when there is planned celebrations and work shouts, so an alternative gluten free option is available, or the staff member has time to prepare something. This will ensure the staff member is still part of the celebrations.

Getting Informed

What is Coeliac Disease?

What is Coeliac Disease Coeliac Disease (see-lee-ak):

It is an autoimmune disease, not an allergy or intolerance. People with coeliac disease have a permanent intestinal reaction to dietary gluten (a protein found in wheat, rye, barley, and oats). Gluten damages the lining of your small bowel (also called the small intestine) causing inflammation for those with coeliac disease, making it difficult for your body to absorb food and nutrients properly. For those with coeliac disease the key to preventing a potentially serious reaction and long-term effects is avoiding gluten permanently. The greatest risk for those with coeliac disease is from accidental exposure (in the workplace and dining out).

Who Gets it?

People of all ages can have coeliac disease. It is a hereditary condition, and environmental factors also play an important role in the disease. It is common in countries with a high gluten intake [international research](#) indicates there could be up to 100,000 people in our NZ team of 5 million with coeliac disease and of those 30,000 are likely to be children under the age of 18. However, a large proportion of those are unaware they have the condition.

How Coeliac Disease is Diagnosed:

Diagnosis of coeliac disease is highly suggestive following a positive blood test. The diagnosis should be confirmed with an intestinal biopsy in adults.

Associated conditions:

- Dermatitis herpetiformis (DH)
- Gluten ataxia
- Type 1 diabetes and
- Autoimmune thyroid disease

Common Symptoms:

Symptoms commonly affect the gastrointestinal tract and include nausea, bloating, vomiting, diarrhoea, constipation, and abdominal pain. Other symptoms, often combined with the gastrointestinal ones, include lethargy, headache and 'brain fog' or poor concentration. Symptoms can occur within an hour of gluten exposure and are often most prominent between 2-4 hours. Gastrointestinal symptoms tend to settle within 24 hours whereas lethargy can persist for days.

Treatment of Coeliac Disease

The only treatment and to reverse the damage to someone diagnosed with coeliac disease is a strict gluten free diet, for life. Avoiding gluten will allow your body to repair the damage and alleviate symptoms.

What is Gluten?

Gluten is a protein found in the cereal's wheat (including spelt, durum and kamut), rye and barley, oats and triticale (wheat/rye mix).



Wheat



Rye



Barley








Oats

There are many processed foods that are gluten free however many processed foods contain hidden sources of gluten. Gluten makes dough elastic, helps it rise and gives the food a chewy texture.

Naturally Gluten Free Foods

There are a large variety of food that is naturally gluten free, so remember to eat/provide more whole, unprocessed foods such as:

 <p>Fruit & vegetables</p>	 <p>Meat/poultry, fish, eggs</p>	 <p>Cheese, milk, yoghurt, cream</p>	 <p>Nuts & seeds</p>	 <p>Fats & oils</p>
<p>Rice, corn, topioca, buckwheat, and their flours</p>		<p>Herbs & spices</p>		<p>Pulses, legumes, beans, and tofu</p>

Be Aware of Cross Contamination

- naturally, gluten free foods can become contaminated with trace amounts of gluten.
- can occur during food handling, storage, or shared food preparation spaces.

Even small amounts of gluten can cause intestinal damage.

- as little as 50 mg, or 1/100th slice of bread.



How to Prevent Cross Contamination

To support those with Coeliac Disease in the workplace

What is Cross Contamination?

This occurs when gluten free foods get contaminated by gluten-containing foods or by things that have come into contact with gluten.

This commonly occurs with:

Sources of Trace Exposure in the Workplace

- hands, clothing, aprons, gloves
- toasters, grills, pans, pots
- chopping boards, work surfaces, benches, cleaning cloths, tea towels
- knives, cutlery, serving spoons and tongs
- butter, margarine, jam, honey, chutney, and mayonnaise
- oils used for frying gluten-containing food
- Pantry crumbs, floury surfaces
- Shared condiments e.g., butter and spreads
- Gluten free food storage with gluten-containing foods
- Shared platters
- Mixed frying/grilling
- added ingredients e.g., stock powder, soy sauce, malt vinegar, recipe base mixers



No Level of Gluten is Regarded as Safe

Even small amounts of gluten can cause intestinal damage

- As little as 50mg, or 1/100th slice of bread
- Naturally gluten free foods can become contaminated with trace amounts of gluten

The key to preventing a potentially serious reaction for staff with coeliac is reducing the risk from accidental exposure.

Risk Minimisation Strategies

Labelling & Sharing

- Food bought from home to work, utensils and drinks should be clearly labelled with the name for whom they are intended and any special dietary requirements i.e., Coeliac Safe and GLUTEN FREE clearly marked on it.

Hygienic Preparation

- Staff should be encouraged to wash their hands before and after mealtimes especially if preparing food for others.
- Eating areas and utensils should be thoroughly cleaned with warm soapy water. Utensils should be put through a dishwasher cycle if appropriate, to remove traces of gluten.

Food Preparation and Storage

- Staff who prepare food should be instructed about necessary measures to prevent cross-contamination during handling, preparation and serving of food.
- Staff preparing food should be made aware of the risk to an have identified staff member(s) in cooking and food preparation i.e., gluten containing food mixed or cooked with gluten free foods.

Staff Education

- Encourage staff including part time workers to complete the Coeliac NZ –Dining Out Programme Gluten Free Catering training to ensure staff understand the risk minimisation strategies for the workplace.
- Staff will receive upon completion of the training a Coeliac New Zealand: Gluten Free Catering certificate that shows a commitment to the preparation and service of food which meets the needs of people with Coeliac Disease or those following a Gluten Free Diet.
- All staff involved in the preparation of gluten free food must have a good knowledge about the suitability of ingredients, including how to read and understand food labels and ingredients lists (especially when substituting ingredients) to ensure that they are gluten free.



Dining Out Programme Training (DOP)



The Dining Out Programme (DOP) is a training and gluten free accreditation programme for the hospitality industry to ensure gluten free food is produced and served safely for coeliac diners. Many New Zealand food businesses now offer gluten free (GF) options, but research by Coeliac New Zealand (CNZ) has found that huge differences in GF practice within the hospitality industry has resulted in coeliac consumers not being able to trust a GF label alone.

If you are a workplace, training institution, marae, club or faith-based organisations and would like to upskill and complete the CNZ Dining Out Programme (DOP) training and/or accreditation:

Contact us today to discuss registration:
dop@coeliac.org.nz or
09 414 7467 or
Download the DOP Application Form



- Coeliac New Zealand can help with training your staff. Contact dop@coeliac.org.nz or healthpromotion@coeliac.org.nz to find out more about how we can help you train your staff to cater gluten free safely

Tips for Food Preparation and Storage

FOOD PREPARATION AND STORAGE	COMMON ERRORS:
<p>Cutting and Slicing: Always use dedicated knives, boards or slicers and ensure that they are cleaned thoroughly before preparing gluten free food.</p>	<p>Not cleaning bread boards well enough between uses. Consider having separate chopping boards for gluten free.</p>
<p>Toasting: If you serve both gluten containing and gluten free breads, ideally separate toasters should be used. If this is not possible you can use toaster_bags or a clean grill to avoid cross contamination.</p>	<p>Thinking that toast crumbs don't matter: One crumb from gluten containing bread or food can make someone ill, so you need to be extra careful when toasting gluten free bread. Consider having separate toasting bags for gluten free bread.</p>
<p>Oven Baking: If gluten free dishes are cooked in the oven at the same time as gluten containing, ensure that gluten free foods are above gluten containing foods. Where fan ovens are used and foods being cooked are made from ingredients that could circulate in the oven, for example flour or flaky pastry, gluten free foods should be covered or cooked separately to prevent cross-contamination.</p>	<p>Underestimating the impact of cross contamination.</p> <p>Using a baking tray for gluten free food and gluten containing food without cleaning between uses.</p> <p>Placing food containing gluten above food that is gluten free in the oven.</p> <p>If using a BBQ – wrap in foil or use a separate BBQ tray</p>
<p>Flour in the kitchen</p> <p>If you are preparing gluten free food or baking where wheat flour is also being used, you need to be careful to avoid cross-contamination.</p> <p>Top Tip: If you are making fresh baked products using wheat flour, try preparing the gluten free products first in a cleaned down area. You can then make the gluten containing products afterwards when the gluten free products are safely covered and stored away.</p>	<p>Making the gluten free and gluten containing products at the same time on the same surfaces risking cross contamination.</p> <p>Storing the gluten free products under the gluten containing products</p>
<p>Setting up work pantry or fridge</p> <p>Ensure all the ingredients that are gluten free are clearly marked and have safeguards in place so none of it gets contaminated by using same utensils when measuring out ingredients.</p> <p>Store all gluten free products above products that are not gluten free.</p> <p>Regularly decontaminate the pantry/fridge to ensure no risk of cross contamination.</p>	<p>Using the same utensils to spoon out gluten free flour baking soda or baking powder that is used for non-gluten free products.</p> <p>Spilling products that have gluten in them onto products that are gluten free.</p>

Managing Coeliac in the Corporate World

Dining Out with Work Colleague & Clients

The most common problem with getting coeliac safe gluten free food when dining out is that your message can get lost or corrupted on its way to the kitchen. Those with coeliac disease can feel uncomfortable about asking restaurant staff (and especially the chefs) about whether their gluten free food on the menu is safe for coeliacs. It can feel like you do not trust their menu or are being an inconvenience. Remember you are your own advocate and it's important you communicate to the person preparing your food your needs and concerns.

Top Tips for Conferences, External Events or Dining Out with Clients or Colleagues

1. Do your homework: Is the chef or food service aware of the dangers of cross-contamination and/or can most of the dishes on the menu be made gluten free.
2. Do not assume that the staff know how to produce 100% gluten free food, but that many are doing their best.
3. Communicate early with the restaurant, food service or conference organisers so not to go hungry or have the same boring choices available.
4. Use gluten free restaurant cards which are available in different languages for you to print out and take with you when you dine out at a restaurant, either at home or abroad when travelling for work purposes. You hand them to the waiter/waitress or front of house staff when you arrive to take to the kitchen/chef. Restaurant cards with information and guidelines about coeliac disease means you don't have to announce in front of colleagues or clients your condition. This takes the stress out of communicating your needs.
5. These are available on [Gluten Free Restaurant Cards for Celiacs / Coeliacs \(celiactravel.com\)](http://celiactravel.com) and are just a donation to download.
6. If you are not sure whether they can produce coeliac safe gluten free food choose somewhere else. It is not worth the risk.

Travelling for Work- Plan for delays

Flying and travelling for work is a situation where you need to plan ahead and be extra vigilant whether on a short or longhaul flight. Flight delays can mean a long wait in an airport surrounded by food services that may not all provide 100% coeliac safe gluten free food. It is up to you to advocate for yourself and communicate to the chef your needs and concerns.

When you are booking a flight with meal, many airlines now offer the choice of gluten free food, however the food company supplying in-flight meals must prepare thousands of meals in the same factory. This means there may be a risk that some cross contamination could occur.

Airlines may also offer gluten free meals on long haul flights, but you need to check as some of these meals are actually noted "low gluten" or "not suitable for people with coeliac disease."

When boarding the plane, inform the stewards if you have ordered a gluten free meal and where you will be seated. You might want to emphasise the importance of avoiding cross contamination which can occur as food is served particularly in a compact space such as a flight cabin.

Check in advance with the airline if it is ok to prepare some snacks to take on the flight.

Explain the situation.

*Check with more recent Covid-19 regulations as food may not be offered at all on many airlines.

Follow the Steps Below to Pack your own Approved Snack or Meal

Airports can be stressful enough without worrying over carry-on luggage. Here are a few carry-on tips to help you pack for success.

Aside from a small number of restricted products, you can take any food or animal products with you for personal use when you leave New Zealand. This includes carrying food or animal products in your checked or hand luggage to consume on the flight however, some countries have quarantine or food safety requirements that stop you from "bringing in" foods or animal products. Countries can also limit the amount of some products you can bring in. You may be asked to dispose of unused items.

1. Any liquid or gel must be in a sealed container with no more than 100ml per container. Place all liquids and gels (this includes any carry-on toiletries) into a single transparent ziplock bag (e.g., sandwich bag) no larger than one litre in volume. This bag should be presented separately at security screening. Only one ziplock bag per passenger. There are three major exceptions: domestic flights, baby products and medications. Strict LAGs (Liquids and Gels) rules are for international flights only.
2. Only pack whole fruit through security. Half-eaten bananas or apples will be confiscated.
3. Dry snacks can usually be packed in your carryon luggage if they are wrapped or are in a sealed container. Do not wrap with aluminium foil as it will interfere with the x-ray machines at customs.
4. **DECLARE IT:** Always declare any food, animal, or plant products on the appropriate arrival documentation that you are carrying and haven't consumed on the flight.

Setting up a Gluten Free Staffroom - Kitchen

Taking time to properly set up your work staff room- kitchen including pantry, cupboard and/or fridge in your workplace is important when we spend much of our life at work. Labelling or colour coding items you bring in as gluten free like your margarine so other staff don't use their knife in your container and then on their gluten containing bread and back in your pot.

Dedicated Gluten Free Space

- It is important to request space for your coeliac safe and gluten free food in the workplace staffroom/kitchen. Letting others that you share the kitchen with know about the importance of keeping these dedicated spaces completely free from gluten due to the risk of cross contamination which makes you extremely sick.
- Explain that you need to place gluten free food above all gluten-containing foods so you can ensure these remain free of crumbs and traces of gluten.
- Make sure you also have enough freezer space. Many gluten free products have a limited shelf-life once opened and should be sealed so other frozen gluten containing products don't contaminate it. You will find gluten free bread and bakery products taste better when frozen and defrosted as you need them.





What to take to Work for Lunch

If you have a Physically Demanding Job & Coeliac Disease?

If you think of food as fuel because when you have a physically demanding job you need to eat the right types of food to keep your energy and concentration up and so you don't feel tired.

Go Energy: this energy comes from carbohydrates. Carbohydrates are the most important source of food energy for exercise and physically demanding roles. Your body needs more carbohydrate than any other food. Carbohydrates are converted into glucose in the body. Glucose circulates in the blood to provide energy to cells, is stored in muscles and the so you need to make sure you have a balanced diet.

Grow Energy: Proteins are the basic building blocks of all body cells and are needed for the growth and repair of body tissues and for many other purposes in the body. Protein comes from both plant and animal sources.

Glow Energy: Vitamins and minerals provide glow energy that help to make the different systems of the body work properly. These are needed in small quantities for a healthy body and are found in fruits and vegetables.

Pumping Energy: Iron is part of a substance called haemoglobin, a component of red blood cells. Haemoglobin is responsible for picking up oxygen in the lungs and carrying it in the blood stream to all the body cells. This oxygen is used in the cells to release energy from the food that you eat. So, you can see how important iron is. Iron is present in meat, fish, poultry which is readily absorbed by the body and vegetables, fruits, eggs, breads and cereals. If you don't include enough iron rich foods you may feel tired, and find it hard to pay attention.

Preparation and planning

Proper planning can help tremendously with making sure that your work life is not interrupted by your coeliac condition. Plan your meals in advance and do it at the beginning of the week.

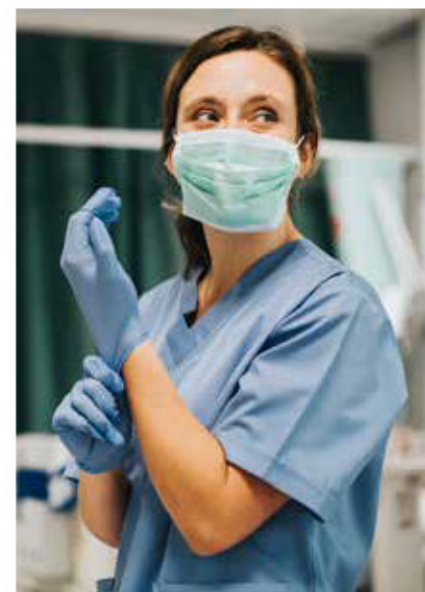
Eating healthy is mastering time management and the battle of nutrition is won or lost at the supermarket. Make your health a part time job, constantly tweak and refine your shopping habits and preparation of meals for your lunches. Over time these small changes will make a major difference in your life, and you will have sustained energy throughout the day.

Planning your gluten free meals is a crucial part of the healing process. Know what you can and cannot consume. Make a list and take a trip to the grocery store. There is a great variety of gluten free options.

For many people living with coeliac disease, it can be a period of trial and error. Find a couple recipes you like and that are easy to prepare and master these. Add some new ones and before you know it you'll have plenty of variety.

Lunch ideas to keep you going

- Fruit e.g. bananas are source of fast, long lasting energy and they help prevent muscle cramping.
- Leftovers (from last night's dinner)
- Bacon & egg pie
- Quiche / frittata's
- Sushi
- Rice pudding
- Fruit salad
- GF corn chips and hummas
- Tuna and rice (put the rice cooler on in the morning so it is fresh)
- Tuna & crackers + cheese
- GF wraps with cold meat & salad + cheese
- Dad's pies if you have a microwave at work
- Quinoa
- Lentils and beans are a good source of protein
- Nut bars
- Drink plenty of water



Positive Ageing in the Workplace

It's important that people with Coeliac Disease don't consider themselves a burden and recognise their self-worth. The availability of opportunities and autonomy over decisions from midlife onwards are indicative of more positive ageing experiences. *(Carpentieri, Elliot, Brett, & Deary, 2016; Darnley, 1975; Davey & Glasgow, 2004; Edwards, 2010)*

Successful ageing does not have to be determined by external resources and physical functioning, attitudes and coping orientations are a key difference between those who thrived and those who do not. *(Carpentieri, Elliot, Brett, & Deary, 2016; Guel, Shefer, Griffin, & Oglvie, 2016).*

Key factors include maintaining a positive outlook, continuing to set and achieve goals in the workplace, and creating adaptive strategies *(Carpentieri, Elliot, Brett, & Deary, 2016; Xavier, Ferraz, Marc, Escateguy, & Morguchi, 2003; Butler & Clarrochi, 2007).*

Social arrangements, social support, social integration, social networks, and social stability are determinants of positive ageing, predictors of retirement adjustment and overall well-being *(Brown, Nesse, Vinokur, & Smith, 2003; Cramm & Nieboer, 2015; Cramm, Van Dijk, & Nieboer, 2013; Toepoel, 2013; Yirmibesoglu, Ertekin, & Berkoz, 2015).*

Autonomy over decisions in the workplace and social connection are also relevant to people with Coeliac Disease. People need to feel in control of themselves and the decisions they make, they need to set and achieve goals. They need to be proactive, getting out of the house, socialising and engaging with other staff and people is essential. The greatest contributions to well-being are found in activities which reaffirm or construct a positive sense of identity. Focusing on resilience and developing your own strategies and advocating for yourself is one way to show resilience in the workplace.



Managing Work in a COVID-19 Environment

Coeliac Disease and Coping with the Stress and Anxiety of Coronavirus

The Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) epidemic may cause additional worries for people with chronic diseases and the entire world.

For those living with coeliac disease, stress and anxiety can be a part of everyday life and you know you are already resilient. Every person may respond in a different way to the current situation, but we suggest a proactive approach can be helpful.



#socialdistancing

Be Proactive and Safeguard Yourself and your Whānau

Many people with coeliac disease may be fearful of their level of risk and exposure to the coronavirus. However, to date, there have been no studies or reports suggesting patients with coeliac disease are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 compared to patients without coeliac disease. Below are some of the most effective ways to safeguard yourself and others:

- **stay home** – remember you are not stuck inside you are safe at home and helping keep everyone else safe too
- **if you are sick** – cough or sneeze into your elbow and if you have cold, flu or COVID-19 symptoms, call Healthline, your doctor or whānau health provider. They will tell you if you should get a COVID-19 test
- **track where you have been** – scan QR codes wherever you go
- **regularly check locations of interest** – to see if you need to get tested. Visit the [COVID19.govt.nz](https://www.covid19.govt.nz) website for latest info
- **get vaccinated** – People with coeliac disease are in group 3 so if you haven't already, you can book your vaccinations now.
- **wear a face covering** – and make sure it covers your nose and mouth when you are in public
- **maintain social distancing** – remain at least 2 metres from other people
- **wash your hands** – wash often with soap for 20 seconds. Then dry. This kills the virus by bursting its protective bubble
- **regularly clean surfaces** – clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as doorknobs and mobile phones.
- **talk to your healthcare team** – Many doctors and dietitians are now offering telehealth services. Follow the recommendations from your healthcare team.
- **turn off media and news for some time each day** – While it is important to stay updated ensure you have time away from social media and the news, and make sure you get your information from reliable sources such as [covid19.govt.nz](https://www.covid19.govt.nz)
- **stay connected with friends and family** – There are many ways to connect with others through technology. Take time to check in with your loved ones, with video conferencing, or phone calls.
- **develop a plan** – to have groceries, medications and other essential items delivered or dropped off. If you are unable to leave home ask a neighbour that is able to go outside, or order groceries online that can be dropped off via a contactless service
- **keep active** – by taking advantage of some time outdoors, playing with the kids, washing the car, or tending to your gardens. Being restricted on what you can do can be overwhelming and if you live on your own you may feel isolated. Enjoy some fresh air while following social distancing rules or try one of the many online videos you can do at home to keep active. Take part in our challenge below!
- **set up a routine to follow** – If you and your family or bubble are at home for a prolonged period. Having set times set aside for specific activities, working from home, online schoolwork, chores, cooking your favourite meal, walking the dog, or taking a relaxing bath etc.
- **try relaxation for stress management** – using mindfulness or meditation. The following app: Daily calm 10-minute Mindfulness Meditation and other similar apps are helpful to create your routine.



