

Policy Statement

Healthy Diet

Coeliac UK is the national charity for people who need to live well gluten free. When removing gluten from the diet it is still possible to maintain a balanced and healthy diet, but there are some important considerations.

What makes up a healthy, balanced diet will vary depending on an individual (such as age, gender, lifestyle and level of physical activity) but the same principles apply. A healthy diet is one, which has a variety of different foods and nutrients but is also balanced. In order to achieve this variety it is important to include foods from the different food groups:

- Carbohydrates
- Fruit and vegetables
- Proteins
- Dairy & alternatives
- Unsaturated oils and spreads in small amounts eg olive, rapeseed and sunflower oils

A diet can be healthy whether you choose to include animal products or follow a plant based diet, but it is important to have variety and include foods from each of the five food groups. The exact quantities of each of the five groups will vary depending on the individual but the [Eatwell Guide](#) is a useful guide to follow.

For individuals with newly diagnosed coeliac disease or those with ongoing symptoms there are some key considerations with respect to calcium and iron to ensure you maintain a healthy and balanced gluten free diet.

People with coeliac disease may have an increased need for calcium compared to the adult population. It is recommended that adults with coeliac disease should have at least 1,000 milligrams (mg) of calcium each day. There are many different sources of calcium from both animal and plant based sources but there are differences in the amount of calcium available and how it may be absorbed and used by the body, depending on the source. Calcium in cow's milk, cheese and yoghurt is more easily absorbed whereas plant foods contain substances which bind to calcium and can inhibit the amount of calcium that is absorbed. There are plant foods that are fortified with calcium so it is important to check the calcium content per serving.

Iron is another key consideration as iron deficiency is common in people with undiagnosed coeliac disease. It is important to include good sources of iron in the diet but especially for someone who is newly diagnosed and may be suffering from iron deficiency anaemia. As with calcium there are both animal and plant based sources of iron although animal sources of iron are better absorbed than iron from plant sources. If there are ongoing symptoms of anaemia despite including sources of iron in the diet and following a strict gluten free diet, it is important to discuss this with a health care professional.

If you need advice on how to source suitable and alternative food options for the five food groups, please contact the expert dietitians on our Helpline 0333 332 2033.