

1) What should “gluten-free” (GF) mean on a food label?

Gluten free should mean just that. Testing is probably the only way to assure a gluten free product, assuming the tests are reasonably accurate.

I have ingested small amounts of gluten and it takes about two weeks for my body to recover. I have traveled in Europe where there is a lower standard of what is gluten free and I it has affected me.

I have also been served “gluten-free” meals on airplanes in Europe, Africa, and for a while in the US until airlines quit offering that option. This is very helpful. However, at times I have been served bread or crackers or sandwiches that clearly are not GF when reading the labels. So a celiac must always be careful.

The GF option needs to be reinstated in the US for airlines who serve food and care taken to instruct food service companies what it means.

Production lines should be thoroughly washed, or preferably separate lines used for processing GF foods. Some labels indicate that they are produced in facilities that also produce foods containing gluten, though there are no gluten-containing ingredients in the specific product. This information is important to include even if the item itself is labeled GF as some of us are very sensitive.

I applaud companies like Kraft and I think Pepsi (Frito-Lay) who have voluntarily indicated that they put gluten-containing ingredients on the label even below required levels for reporting. This makes it much easier to choose. Reading labels is not always sufficient when there can be trace elements not listed.

2) How identify gluten-free foods? Time spent identifying foods?

If the item does not specify GF, I read the ingredients and, if I don't see any gluten ingredients, I contact the company as it is not presently required to put trace materials on the ingredients list as I understand it.

Or I consult the GF lists from one of my support groups. I belong to the following GF support organizations and triangulate on their recommendations: Celiac Sprue Association, Gluten Intolerance Group, Celiac Disease Foundation, Tri County Celiac Support Group in MI, and the Gluten Free Gang in Columbus, OH at the OSU Children's' Hospital. Some of them provide lists of GF foods to their members, although the caveat is always that the information is obtained from the manufacturer. Sometimes I carry these lists with me to the store.

Generally, since being diagnosed in 2001 but probably having endured it most of my life, I do not eat out if I can help it. If I do eat out, then I try to go to restaurants that have GF lists, like Outback Steakhouse, or work with the chef but I don't like having to

inconvenience the restaurant. I carry foods with me when traveling, both domestically and internationally. I do my best to adhere to a GF diet.

3) What percentage and types of GF foods purchased?

Most of what I buy is plain meat, vegetables, nuts, and fruits (90%). Other products are generally ones that I know are GF from the manufacturer or are marked GF. I do not gamble much. The two week recovery time is not worth it.

4) Does “gluten-free” printed on a product label influence your decision to purchase products having the same ingredients? To what extent?

Yes, I tend not to risk. I have now the experience and buy the GF choice most of the time. Yes, having the GF label does influence my decision.

5) Would you consider a two or more level definition of gluten-free helpful?

Since there seems to be a range of sensitivity, a range of designations is possible. For myself, I prefer that GF mean GF with tests to back it up.

One last comment – The GF designation needs to apply to drugs also. There is only one malaria medication I can take, for example. If it weren't for Steve Plogsted's glutenfreedrugs.com, and knowing about it through the Gluten Free Gang's conferences, I might have taken the wrong medication for a month on a trip to India. Vitamins are another issue since they are not regulated.