

# Gluten Free Label Reading

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## Terms to Know

**Food and Drug Administration (FDA):** U.S. government agency overseeing the processing, handling, safety and labeling of foods and dietary supplements.

**20 parts per million (ppm):** The amount of gluten widely accepted to be safely eaten and tolerated by people with Celiac disease. It is the equivalent to 1/8 of a teaspoon of all-purpose flour.

**Gluten-free:** a term FDA allows on a food or supplement package to designate that the product contains less than 20 ppm gluten. “Gluten-free” is an optional labeling term that can be used for foods that are naturally gluten-free (bottled water, canned vegetables, for example) or to distinguish between variations of a product (regular oats versus gluten-free oats).

## Label Reading 101

**A gluten-free label:** If a product claims to be gluten-free on the package, then it is most likely safe to eat. Take note that manufacturers can change their ingredients at any time so it is a good habit to read labels every time the food is eaten.

**Check the allergen listing:** Some packaging has a list of common allergens found in the product. This list can be a quick way to rule something out if the package says: “contains wheat.” However, *a lack of allergen labeling does NOT mean that the product is gluten-free.* Barley and rye are not in the top eight allergens required to be listed.

### Check for obvious gluten ingredients:

- Wheat
- Barley
- Rye
- Malt
- Brewer’s yeast
- Oats (unless specifically labeled gluten-free)

### Check for hidden or questionable ingredients:

- Maltodextrin - can be derived from various sources, sometimes even wheat, but the finished product has minimal levels of gluten and is considered safe on a gluten free diet.
- Maltodextrose - can be derived from various sources, sometimes wheat. If the source of Maltodextrose is unclear, then contacting the manufacturer may help in identifying if the product is safe.

- Dextrin - can be derived from various sources, sometimes wheat. Dextrin derived from wheat is not allowed in a gluten free diet.
- Dextrose - a simple sugar that is abundant in nature; it is another form of glucose and is safe to consume in a gluten free diet.
- Caramel color - can be derived from gluten-containing sources; however, the final product contains minimal levels of gluten and is considered safe on a gluten free diet.

#### **A note on alcohol:**

Alcoholic beverages are not regulated by FDA, but by the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB). The TTB allows for wines and distilled spirits (originating from grains other than those containing gluten) to use a “gluten-free” statement on the label. They also allow for a statement of “Processed,” “Treated,” or “Crafted” “to remove gluten” along with a warning that the product may contain gluten. Distilled spirits are allowed on a gluten free diet. However, traditionally fermented beverages such as beer or malt beverages contain gluten.

### **Symbols and Certifications**

There are several independent organizations that will give their stamp of approval of a product meeting the regulation of less than 20 parts per million of gluten. Food companies must apply for these designations and undergo rigorous review of their processing along with sample testing to confirm their gluten content. It is *not necessary* to purchase only products that have been verified by these independent organizations. The following symbols are commonly seen on food products:



More information is available at <https://celiac.org/live-gluten-free/glutenfreediet/label-reading/>