

Top 10 ingredients you really don't need to worry about

If you're like everyone else, you probably have at least two reactions when you read conflicting information about the gluten status of certain ingredients.

One, you get confused.

Two, you start to think gluten is everywhere and you need to worry about everything. That's not good for your health.

In addition, some ingredients just never seem to get off lengthy lists of "things to question," including those from health professionals who, you might think, ought to know better. That's why we think it sometimes makes more sense to explain why you don't have to worry about certain ingredients than why you might have to worry about them. We have done our homework and we stand by what we publish.

Here are the leading ingredients that we think you can top worrying about right now.

Caramel Color

Why it's on worry lists in the first place: The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) says caramel color can be made from malt syrup or starch hydrolysates, either of which could contain gluten.

Why you don't need to worry: Despite what the CFR says, companies use corn because corn produces a better product. We don't know of a single instance of a caramel color ever being made of anything containing gluten.



Why that's a good thing: Caramel color is in a lot of products.

Citric Acid

Why it's on worry lists in the first place: Citric Acid is usually made from corn, beet sugar or molasses. But it can be made from wheat.

Why you don't have to worry: Citric acid is highly processed and purified. The steps that bring it to this point fully remove any gluten proteins.

Why that's a good thing: It's one less ingredient to worry about and it's a fairly common ingredient.

Dextrose

Why it's on worry lists in the first place: Dextrose can be made from wheat. In fact, sometimes it is.

Why you don't have to worry: Like citric acid, dextrose is a highly processed ingredient. Regardless of which starch is used, the end result is gluten free.

Why that's a good thing: If you know dextrose is gluten free, that might make it easier to remember that dextrin can contain gluten. Dextrin is gluten free when it is made from corn, potato, arrowroot, rice, or tapioca. In rare instances, dextrin is made from wheat, and it is not processed to the point where the gluten proteins are removed. But in these instances, "wheat" will appear on the label.

Glucose Syrup

Why it's on worry lists in the first place: Glucose syrup is typically made from corn in the US, although wheat is used more often in Europe.

Why you don't have to worry: Glucose syrup is another highly processed ingredient and the processing removes harmful gluten protein. In fact, both the European Food Safety Authority and researchers in Finland have concluded that glucose syrup made from wheat can be safely included in the gluten-free diet. They tested glucose syrup and found it to be free of harmful levels of gluten. Also, a clinical study showed that patients with celiac disease who consumed glucose syrup for 24 weeks showed no signs of damage when biopsied.

Why that's a good thing: Here's an ingredient where processors, scientists, researchers and physicians all agree. With such strong evidence, you never have to worry about glucose syrup.



Glue

(primarily found on stamps and envelopes)

Why it's on worry lists: This is a good question. Possibly because if you mix wheat flour with water, you get a kind of primitive glue.

Why you don't have to worry: The US Postal Service and the association that represents envelope makers say their glue does not contain harmful gluten. In fact, there are only a few envelope glue makers in the US and the largest one makes its adhesive from corn. More than 98 percent of all stamps sold by the US Postal Service are self adhesive and do not require licking. The other 2 percent do not contain gluten in the glue.

Why that's a good thing: Now that you know there is no gluten in glue, you can stop wasting time worrying about it and ignore any and all news paper stories, blogs, etc that perpetrate this myth.

Hydrolyzed Vegetable protein (HVP) and Hydrolyzed Plant Protein (HPP) 6

Why they're on worry lists: Partially because they always have been, despite the fact that they did not belong there in the first place.

Why you don't have to worry: Because you won't find these phrases on ingredient lists! Roughly 20 years ago, the FDA said processors have to define the "vegetable" or "plant" in their ingredients. So you will read hydrolyzed wheat protein and know you have to avoid the item, or hydrolyzed soy protein, and know the item is safe as long as it is free of any gluten-containing ingredients.

Why that's a good thing: The shorter the list of things you worry about, the easier the gluten-free diet becomes.

Maltodextrin 1

Why it's on worry lists: Maltodextrin can be made from a variety of starches, including corn, potato, rice or wheat.

Why you don't need to worry: The source does not matter because maltodextrin is such a highly processed ingredient that the protein is removed, rendering it gluten free. If wheat is used to make maltodextrin, "wheat" will appear on the label. This might give you pause, but even in this case, the maltodextrin would be gluten free. In Canada, maltodextrin

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made from wheat was tested with one of the most sensitive tests available and no gluten was detected.

Why that's a good thing: This is the fourth ingredient on this list that is so highly processed, gluten proteins are removed. Over time, you will recognize each of the four and know that they are safe.

Mono and diglycerides 8

Why they're on worry lists: Mono and diglycerides are fats and therefore gluten free. Questions about mono and diglycerides arose because of suspicion that wheat might be used with them as a carrier. It is unclear what caused that suspicion.

Why you don't have to worry: To date there has been no evidence advanced that this is the case and there are no instances of mono and diglycerides ever being connected with gluten. Fats are gluten free.

Why this is a good thing: It's two less ingredients to worry about.

Spices 9

Why they're on worry lists: Spices and seasonings seem to go together. That's understandable but they are two different things.

Why you don't have to worry: You don't have to worry about spices. Pure spices are gluten free. But seasonings are not well defined. Some are gluten free; others are not.

Why that's a good thing: Being able to distinguish between spices and seasonings makes it a lot easier to read an ingredient label.

Vinegar

Why it's on worry lists: Because a long time ago someone suggested that vinegar distilled from wheat might still contain gluten proteins.

Why you don't have to worry: As scientists have always said, this concern is not only silly but also not possible in the real world. The gluten protein is too heavy to vaporize and end up in the distillate. Still vinegar arises as a supposed concern, partially because once something goes on the internet, it lasts forever. If you think distilled vinegar causes problems, avoid it. But the cause is not gluten.

Why that's a good thing: Vinegar is in a lot of things – salad dressings and marinades, to mention just two. Knowing vinegar is safe will help you include them in your diet.



None of this information is meant to sound casual about the importance of avoiding gluten. It is meant to ease your mind in certain areas and to help you confident about the foods you eat. The more nagging doubts you can eliminate, the better you will feel about gluten-free living.

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