



Celiac Disease Awareness Month



May is Celiac Awareness Month, a time that is dedicated to raising awareness about celiac disease. This is an autoimmune disorder that affects approximately 1 in 100 people worldwide. Greater awareness can lead to earlier diagnosis and improved health outcomes. This helps build empathy for the challenges of living gluten-free – not just avoiding bread or pasta, but carefully reading labels, avoiding cross-contamination, and navigating social situations and restaurants.

For individuals experiencing food insecurity, managing celiac disease can be difficult. Gluten-free foods often come with a higher price tag and are less likely to be available at food pantries or through emergency food programs. Accessing safe, gluten-free options can feel out of reach when facing limited resources. The challenge of managing a strict diet under financial strain highlights the need for support, awareness, and inclusion of gluten-free options in hunger relief efforts.

Food banks and community partners can help by:

- **Increasing awareness** of medically necessary diets like gluten-free for celiac disease.
- **Offering gluten-free shelf-stable options** such as rice, lentils, canned beans, plain canned vegetables, or gluten-free oats when available.
- **Labeling items** clearly if they are gluten-free to help individuals make safe choices quickly.
- **Encouraging individuals with special dietary needs** to share those needs with pantry staff or volunteers to help them navigate available options.
- **Grab naturally gluten-free foods** such as fruits, vegetables, and lean cut meats
- **Training staff and volunteers** on food allergies and medically necessary diets to ensure accurate guidance and support.
- **Creating dedicated gluten-free sections** or boxes to reduce the risk of cross-contact and simplify access for those in need.
- **Partnering with gluten-free food manufacturers or local businesses** to secure donations or discounted products.

- **Providing educational materials** about celiac disease and gluten-free living, including safe foods and common hidden sources of gluten.

[More information in PDF form](#)