

## Recommendations on Oat Consumption

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Based on numerous studies conducted with adults and children in Europe and the United States, it appears that the majority of individuals with CD can tolerate oats<sup>1-6</sup>. Oats, however, are often grown or processed with other cereals leading to cross-contamination with wheat, barley or rye<sup>7</sup>.

Currently, there are a growing number of producers of pure gluten-free oats in North America. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (formerly the American Dietetic Association) recommends that interested individuals discuss the gradual introduction of specially produced labeled gluten-free oats into their diet with their dietitian or doctor before starting. Adequate water, when adding oats, is recommended, as is contacting the doctor or dietitian if any gastrointestinal symptoms occur<sup>8</sup>.

Although oats appear to be safe in the vast majority of individuals with celiac disease, there is evidence that, in some individuals, the protein in oats (avenin) can trigger an immune response similar to gluten<sup>9-10</sup>. In addition, some people may need to avoid oats due to sensitivities or allergies, similar to other foods, such as nuts or shellfish. For these reasons, close monitoring by a healthcare professional experienced in celiac disease is recommended during introduction of oats into a gluten-free diet.

Currently, avoiding consumption of oats is recommended by the clinicians of the Celiac Center at BIDMC for newly diagnosed patients until it can be clearly demonstrated that celiac disease is well-controlled. Good control is demonstrated by the complete resolution of symptoms (diarrhea, other symptoms of malabsorption or DH skin rash) and a normal or nearly normal tissue transglutaminase level (IgA tTG). At that point, under physician guidance, the gradual addition of pure oats up to 50 grams/day (a little more than 1/2 cup rolled oats or 1/4 cup steel oats) from a dedicated gluten-free facility may be attempted<sup>8</sup>. Follow-up with the patient's gastroenterologist should occur three to six months after the addition of oats into the gluten-free diet.

Gluten-free oats are a tasty and excellent source of dietary fiber. We remain optimistic that uncontaminated sources of oats will continue to be available and affordable in this country and can be a safe and useful addition to the gluten-free diet.

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