



Gluten Free / Casein Free diet

By Leigh Ann Chapman, ND

www.chapmanND.com

The Gluten Free/ Casein Free (GF/CF) diet has been shown to be one of the single most important dietary therapies for children on the Autism Spectrum. Parents report improvements in almost every aspect of their child's well being including speech, cognition, bowel movements, sleep patterns, behaviors, stimming, awareness, sociability, emotional lability and eye contact.

What are Gluten and Casein?

Gluten is a protein that is contained in foods, such as wheat, barley, rye and oats. Casein is a protein found in dairy products such as milk, ice cream, cheese and yogurt. In the intestinal tract of some children, gluten and casein breakdown into peptides which have an "opiate" effect on the receptors of the brain.

How do we start? -- GRADUALLY

Beginning the diet gradually as opposed to cold turkey is less likely to cause rebellion and stress in the family. Interventions should be done in a way that create the least amount of frustration and most amount of compliance. Therefore, I recommend that you begin slowly.

Add GFCF foods to your child's diet BEFORE you actually start the diet. Start introducing rice and potatoes if your child only eats noodles. Add fruits and vegetables to every meal so that you child may eventually try the new foods. This will allow your child to get used to some of the new foods before they are the only options.

Start the diet gradually, one meal or one food at a time. That is, for a week, just make dinner gluten free or casein free. Then once you've got that figured out, add in breakfast. Then after that's done, add in lunch or a snack.

I recommend that you remove Casein (dairy) first, as that one is usually easier than removing gluten. When you have successfully removed casein, gradually remove Gluten.

How long will I have to do this?

If you are going to try the diet, I recommend that you give it **at least** 3-6 months. Some patients, although it is rare, have needed at least a year to realize the diet's full effect.

You may notice improvements in behavior or bowel habits in as little as two weeks. If you have committed to six months and have not seen any difference, consult with your doctor or therapist to see if other dietary therapies should be implemented.

I feel that if we are successful in healing the gut and modulating the endocrine response that your child, over time, may no longer need the GF/CF diet. This may take years of treatment. This will be determined by careful, controlled reintroduction and monitoring of symptoms.

Alternatives to Wheat/ Gluten:

Amaranth
 Brown & Rice flour
 Buckwheat flour and groats (Kasha)
 Corn meal (and polenta)
 Lentils
 Millet (pilaf and flour)
 Poha
 Potato starch
 potato flour
 Quinoa flour
 rice cereal
 Soy (unless intolerant)
 sorghum flour
 sugar pure cane
 sweet potato flour
 Tapioca
 Tapioca Starch (produced from cassava)

Teff
 Yucca (cassava flour)
 Sorghum Flour
 Clabber Girl Baking products (Baking Powder)

Alternatives to Dairy/ Casein

Soy milk
 Rice milk
 Almond milk
 Rice dream “ice cream”
 Soy dream “ice cream”
 Coconut bliss “ice cream”
 (www.coconutbliss.com)
 Fruit Sorbet
 Soy or rice Cheese
 Instead of butter, season with chicken broth or lemon juice

Hidden sources of Gluten and Casein:

There are many products that contain gluten or casein that you will need to beware of. Many hidden sources include cosmetics, medicines, fillers, preserved meats, condiments, thickeners and marinades. Read labels carefully. Call the manufacturer if you have questions. A complete list of foods to avoid is available at www.gfcfdiet.com and www.tacanow.com.

Resources

www.gfcfdiet.com - Look under *directory* for a list of where to buy GF/CF foods.
www.autismNDI.com- Autism Network for Dietary Intervention
[Bob’s Red Mill](http://www.bobsredmill.com)- Our local resource of Gluten free flours, baking mixes and recipes. Go out to the Big Red Mill on Hwy 224 in Clackamas and shop the aisles for ideas!
 Purchase the Gluten Free starter kit! www.bobsredmill.com
[New Season’s Market](http://www.newseasonsmarket.com): This grocery store has a whole aisle dedicated to gluten free options. Information is also available on their website: www.newseasonsmarket.com

Books:

[Special Diets for Special Kids I and II](#) by Lisa Lewis PhD
[Special Foods for Special Kids](#) - Todd Edelson - (great recipes)
[The Gluten Free Gourmet Comfort Foods](#)- Bette Hagman
[Cooking Healthy Gluten and Casein Free Food for Children](#) by Betsy Prohaska
[The GFCFdiet.com cookbook](#) available from the GFCFdiet.com website.
 This is a compilation of parents’ best tried and true recipes.