

The rules on making claims about gluten in food are changing on the 1 January 2012 and you may no longer be able to call your food ‘gluten-free’.

It’s important that you train your staff who work with food so they understand the new descriptions and exactly what they mean. Your staff can then explain to customers what the foods contain and how they are made.

What is gluten?

Gluten is a protein found in cereals such as wheat, rye, barley, and can contaminate some oat products. People with gluten intolerance (coeliac disease) need to avoid all food containing gluten.

Gluten can be present in food knowingly as an ingredient or accidentally by coming into contact with gluten-containing ingredients, such as wheat flour or breadcrumbs, used in the same premises.

You may choose to offer foods for people with gluten intolerance. Many people avoiding gluten will become regular customers of establishments where they are confident their food has been prepared by people who understand their needs and the food will not make them unwell.

What claims can I make? – The rules

The new rules mean there are two claims allowed to describe foods suitable for people with a gluten intolerance. These claims apply to both food where gluten is knowingly an ingredient or present accidentally from cross-contamination:

1. **‘gluten-free’**: for foods that contain **no more than 20 parts of gluten in a million (ppm)**. These can be foods that:
 - are specially made for someone with gluten intolerance, by using an ingredient that has been treated to reduce its gluten content (such as bread made with gluten-reduced flour)
 - and/or have a gluten-containing ingredient substituted with one that does not contain gluten (such as pasta made from rice instead of wheat)
 - are everyday foods that meet the gluten limit even though they are not specifically made for this purpose (such as a soup made only from vegetables).
2. **‘very low gluten’**: only for foods that are specifically prepared for people with a gluten intolerance. They must contain **no more than 100 parts of gluten in a million** and **contain an ingredient that has been specially processed to reduce its gluten content**. They may also contain substitute ingredients.

What other information can I provide?

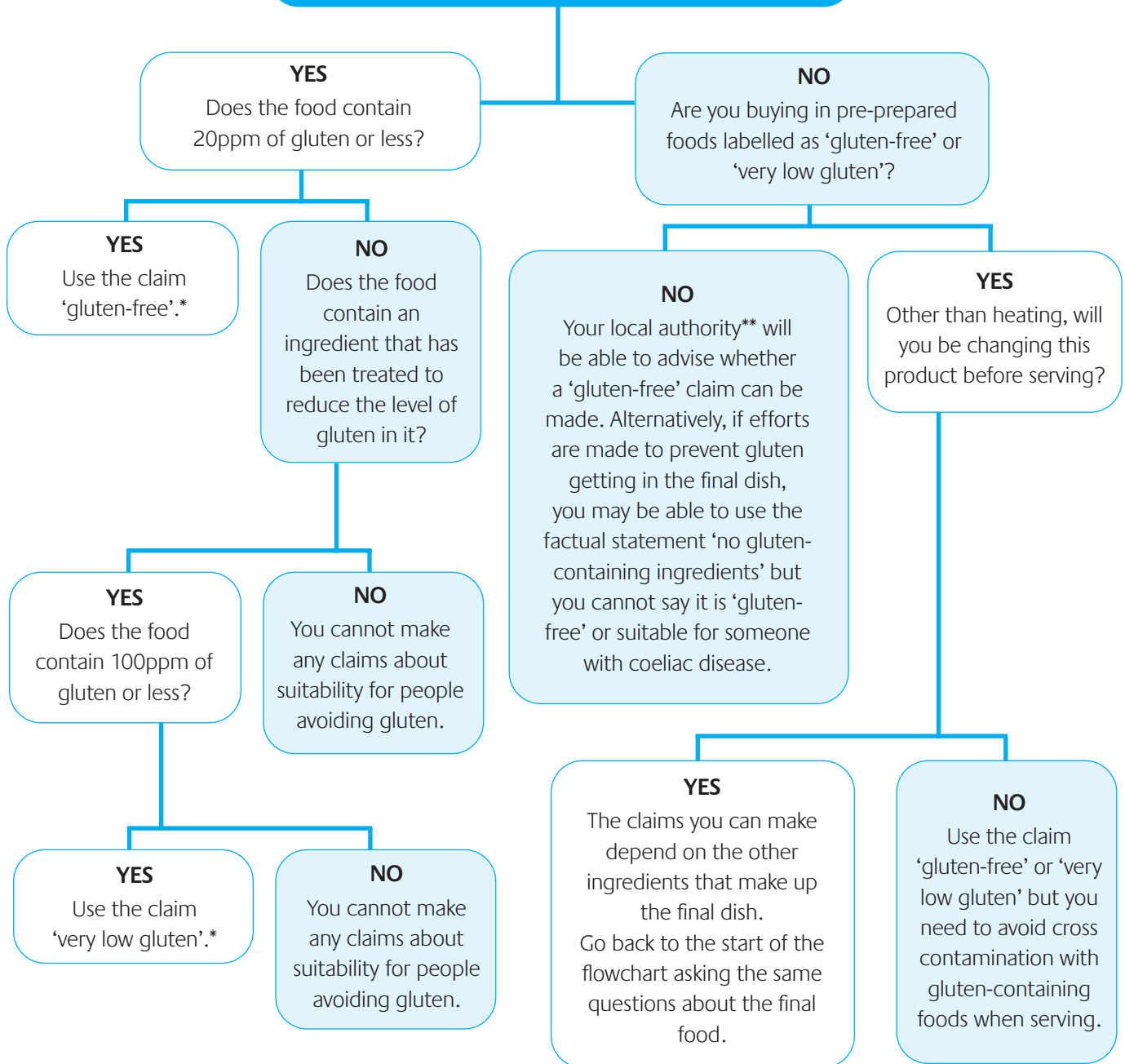
If food does not comply with these new rules, it cannot be described as ‘gluten-free’ or ‘very low gluten’. But businesses could make a factual statement such as ‘no gluten-containing ingredients’, to let customers know that the food doesn’t contain any of these ingredients.

If businesses do use these factual statements it is important that they take appropriate steps to manage cross-contamination from gluten-containing foods. Businesses need to be clear that they are not suggesting the food is suitable for someone with coeliac disease. This extra information will allow customers to understand the level of risk and make a decision about whether to buy the food.

How to make a claim about gluten in food

Here is a handy chart to help you

Do you know the level of gluten in your food?



* 'Very low gluten' foods and 'gluten free' foods that you have specifically made for people with a gluten intolerance, for example using a special replacement ingredient or a gluten-reduced ingredient, will need to be notified to the relevant authority (please see guidance at food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/publication/guidancelabellinggluten2010.pdf or contact your environmental health officer.)

Where can you get more information?

A full copy of the rules can be found in Commission Regulation EC No. 41/2009 (S.I. 2010 No. 2281**) concerning the composition and labelling of foodstuffs suitable for people intolerant to gluten.

Guidance on what it means for your business, can be found on the Food Standards Agency's website at: food.gov.uk/safereating/allergyintol/gluten/

More information on controlling cross-contamination can be found in Safer food, better business**, or from your environmental health officer.

** or equivalent in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland