



Canadian Celiac Association position statement on the consumption of corn flour, corn meal and corn starch by individuals with celiac disease

Background:

The Canadian Celiac Association (CCA) revised its Labeling Guidelines resource in October 2021 and again in June 2022. During this time, there has been some confusion about the risk of corn products; specifically corn flour, corn meal and corn starch, and when it is recommended that an individual with celiac disease purchase a corn-based product with a gluten-free (GF) claim.

In 2012, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) undertook a surveillance (or study) of corn flour. In the study, *“Gluten contamination of naturally gluten-free flours and starches used by Canadians with celiac disease”*, 16% of corn flour samples had contained over 20 parts per million (ppm) gluten, considered unsafe for individuals with celiac disease, ranging anywhere from 8 ppm to 731 ppm. Manufacturing processes have remained relatively unchanged since this study was completed. You can find the study here: (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24124879/>)

Some companies (e.g., Bob’s Red Mill, Nature’s Path) process GF corn flour/meal in a separate GF facility due to the potential for cross-contamination/contact with other flours and gluten-containing grains. Whenever flour is processed in the same facility as other flours, there is a potential for gluten cross-contamination/contact.

For these reasons, we have always suggested that grains and flours be purchased with a GF claim, including corn flour/meal.

Undertaking more research

During a November 22, 2022, meeting with Health Canada, we requested that corn flour/meal and corn-based products undergo another review, like the study in 2012. Until a repeat surveillance can be scheduled, Health Canada has agreed to review past ingredient surveys to assess if snack related items, like corn chips and corn puffs, have been studied to determine safety. Health Canada also clarified that the 2012 “corn” study remains relevant.

Independently, we will be reaching out to corn producers to learn more about their current farm-to-table manufacturing processes and risk of gluten cross-contamination/contact.

What about corn starch?

Corn starch is a highly processed food product/ingredient and as such is at low-risk of gluten cross-contamination/contact. For this reason, individuals with celiac disease do not have to purchase or consume corn starch with a GF claim. Additionally, corn starch is generally used in smaller amounts when compared to corn flour-based products (like tortillas, nachos), which further reduces gluten cross-contamination/contact risk.

Label Reading Reminder

Do not consume any product that contains barley, rye, regular oats and/or wheat (BROW).

Do not consume any product that has a “may contain” statement for any BROW grain, which is unless there is a GF claim.

Products with a GF claim and a “may contain BROW” statement is safe for individuals with celiac disease because the product was tested for gluten ppm.

Due to high risk of gluten cross-contamination/contact:

- Buy corn flour, corn meal with a GF claim
- Buy products that contain corn flour or corn meal as the first or second ingredient in the ingredient list with a GF claim

Due to low risk of gluten cross-contamination/contact:

- There is no need to buy corn starch with a GF claim
- There is no need to buy products with a GF claim if corn flour or corn meal are listed farther down in the ingredients list

When a product makes you sick/ill:

Consumers play a key role in keeping food safe. If a food product makes you feel unwell, it is important to report it to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) so that it can be investigated and potentially be removed from store shelves. With every food complaint, the CFIA undertakes a review as part of their food safety process and follows up with the consumer reporting the issue.

If you are reporting a gluten related food product concern to the CFIA, please also contact the CCA at info@celiac.ca with information about your complaint such as the name of the product, your symptoms, your concerns, as well as the date reported to the CFIA. The CCA will use this information to further advocate to Health Canada on behalf of the celiac community.

Learn how to report a food complaint here: [Food Safety & Recalls - Canadian Celiac Association](#)

Please contact the CCA with any questions at: info@celiac.ca or 1-800-363-7296 ext. 224

Issued: December 2022 by the Registered Dietitians Working Group, a sub-committee of CCA's Professional Advisory Council.