



Updated June 2011

What is celiac disease?

Celiac disease (CD) is a genetic digestive disorder that affects 1 in 133 people. Those with celiac disease are unable to digest gluten, a protein found in wheat, rye, barley and derivatives of those grains.

When the disease is left undetected or untreated, a child with celiac disease may experience gastrointestinal problems, slowed gross motor development and learning problems. With strict adherence to a gluten-free diet, a child with celiac disease is able to live a normal and happy life.

Celiac disease is also known as “celiac sprue,” “sprue,” and “gluten intolerance.”

What should I watch for?

While on a gluten-free diet, it is unlikely that a student with celiac disease will exhibit any noticeable symptoms of disease. A strict gluten-free diet is a medical requirement for the child's health. Gluten, even in small amounts, damages the intestine.

If a child ingests gluten, he or she may exhibit one or more of the following:

- Bloating, cramps, or foul-smelling gas
- Diarrhea
- Constipation
- Vomiting
- Irritability or short-term memory problems, which may interfere with school performance

The severity of these symptoms will vary, but are not likely to escalate to a state of emergency requiring medical intervention. Parents should be notified if gluten is ingested.

Similar symptoms may exist between undiagnosed celiac disease and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). It would be prudent for classroom teachers to observe students with behavioral and/or learning problems with this in mind.

What are the restrictions?

A student with celiac disease who complies with the gluten-free diet will be able to actively participate in all academic and social activities with few exceptions. Most activities involving food products would be off limits, unless the food is gluten-free.

Arts and crafts

Some materials used for arts and crafts projects may contain gluten. Paste-type glues and Play Dough are potential hazards and should be investigated. Crayons may also be a problem for small children. Work with the child's family to provide safe materials or an alternative project.

School lunch

Limited selections available in school cafeterias mean gluten-free choices may not be available on a daily basis. It is the responsibility of the child's parent(s) or guardian(s) to work with the school dietitian to provide the student's lunch, or work with the cafeteria staff to have alternative gluten-free items available.

Common products with gluten:

- Bread products, cereals, crackers and pasta
- Pastries, cookies, cakes, donuts and other desserts
- Some candies and chewing gum
- Many snack foods
- Finger paints
- Paste-glue, Play Dough and some crayons



Classroom Activities

Keep parents or guardians informed of classroom activities involving food. Working with parents or guardians to have the appropriate gluten-free substitutes will allow the child to participate in activities, rather than feeling left out or forgotten. An emergency supply of snacks and treats at school may be helpful.

The most important foods to avoid are those which are made from gluten-containing grains and flours: wheat, rye, barley, spelt, triticale and kamut. This is not a complete list. All products containing flour must be avoided. Safe grains and starches include rice, corn, potato, tapioca, bean, sorghum, soy, arrowroot and nut flours.

How Can I Help?

The importance of communication between the parent(s) or guardian(s) and the teacher cannot be over-emphasized. As with all diseases, it is imperative that the teacher respect the wishes of the family. Children frequently share food. It is important that the classroom teacher be aware of food sharing when it involves the child with celiac disease.

Maintaining a gluten-free diet in a “gluten-filled” society is very difficult. The family and your student with celiac disease will certainly appreciate all of your support.

This document may be reproduced for educational purpose only.

Other helpful information is available at www.GLUTEN.net.

Advances in celiac disease are fast-paced. If this document is more than 2 years old, please visit our Web site for updated documents.

This information should not be used to diagnose or treat anemia or celiac disease. For questions about anemia and celiac disease consult your healthcare team when considering this information.

Please consider your local GIG branch as another resource.

Gluten Intolerance Group (GIG)
31214 – 124th Ave. S.E.
Auburn, WA 98092-3667

Phone: 253-833-6655
Fax: 253-833-6675

www.GLUTEN.net
info@GLUTEN.net

GIG is a nonprofit 501c3 national organization providing support for persons with gluten intolerances, in order to live healthy, productive lives. GIG Branches provide support at a local level.

To make a donation or become a volunteer to GIG, visit our Web site or call the office at 253-833-6655.