

# CARING FOR A STUDENT WITH CELIAC DISEASE



## WHAT IS CELIAC DISEASE?

Celiac disease is an **autoimmune disease** triggered by **consuming gluten**, a protein found in wheat, barley and rye, resulting in damage to the small intestine.

When a person with celiac disease eats gluten, the immune system sees gluten as a threat and mounts an attack. However, it ends up damaging the villi of the intestines, which help to digest food. Damaged villi make it nearly impossible for the body to absorb nutrients, leading to malnourishment and a host of other issues.

## SYMPTOMS OF CELIAC DISEASE

Celiac disease can affect any bodily system, from gastrointestinal to neurological and even dermatological. There are **over 250+ symptoms** associated with celiac disease, and symptoms can vary widely from person to person. Some patients have no symptoms aside from intestinal damage. It's best to ask the student what symptoms they experience when they get sick.

Common symptoms include:

- Diarrhea
- Constipation
- Vomiting
- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Brain fog
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Sadness
- Irritability
- Anxiety
- Inability to focus

## MY SYMPTOMS ARE...


*Write the student's symptoms during or after a "glutening"*


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### In Case of Emergency

 Guardian's name

 Guardian's phone

 Guardian's email

## TREATING CELIAC DISEASE

The only existing treatment for celiac disease is a strict, lifelong gluten-free diet. When someone is “glutened,” ie, ingests gluten, symptoms can be alleviated but not eradicated. Note that because celiac disease is an autoimmune condition and **not an allergy**, medications like Benadryl or epinephrine will have no effect.

If you do want to give a general medication to address a symptom like a headache, read the ingredients list first to ensure it’s gluten-free, or at least not made with wheat starch. Gluten in medication is uncommon, but not unheard of. Many generic versions of common medications, like ibuprofen and acetaminophen, are labeled “gluten-free” on the box and/or bottle.

Patients with dermatitis herpetiformis (DH), an itchy skin rash associated with celiac disease, may have a prescription for dapsone, an antibiotic that relieves itching, or a related medication. These can either be applied topically or ingested orally.

### TREATMENT OPTIONS

- |                      |                     |                               |
|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| ✓ Avoiding gluten    | ✓ Dapsone (for DH)  | ✗ Auto-injectors like EpiPen® |
| ✓ Nutritious GF food | ✓ Rest & Relaxation | ✗ Benadryl®                   |

## MAKING A PLAN: 504 VS IHP

Students and their guardian(s) may want a formal plan, like an IHP or a 504 plan (which is a legally-binding agreement as outlined by the Americans with Disabilities Act). Work with them on creating a comprehensive guide to caring for the child if they get glutened during school hours. For more information on 504s and IHP, check out our article [“How to Keep Your Child Safe In School; Creating an IHP or 504 Plan for Celiac Disease”](#)

## CONCERNS ABOUT FREQUENT ILLNESS

If the student is regularly coming in with celiac symptoms, consider talking with them and/or their guardian(s) about cross-contact or identifying safe, gluten-free options at school and home. In some cases, the student may be ignoring the need for gluten-free food or experiencing bullying and/or peer pressure. Direct them to speak with a dietitian, school counselor, or therapist as needed.

## OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES

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| ✓ BeyondCeliac.org   | ✓ National Association of School Nurses                    |
| ✓ Email <a href="mailto:info@beyondceliac.org">info@beyondceliac.org</a> | ✓ Scan QR code for more free resources from Beyond Celiac! |
| ✓ US Dept. of Education (504 plan info)                                  |  |

