



Sending Our Celiac or Gluten Intolerant Children to School

Whether your child is newly diagnosed or been living with celiac disease or gluten intolerance for a long time, you may experience worries and or anxieties sending your children to school. This fall I get to send my gluten free baby to kindergarten. I have a plethora of anxieties and worries, but I cannot deny her the joy of experiencing life just like any other child. I have no choice but to face this new chapter in our life head on.

When sending our Celiac/Gluten Intolerant children to school it is very important to establish a kind and positive relationship with your child's teacher and principle as well as be proactive and hands on, willing to provide resources, information and help to the teacher when needed. I have compiled a list of helpful hints and resources to help make this transition easier. Remember each experience will vary and you will not always get the response you expect or deserve. Try to stay positive and take one day at a time.

Do's

- Do write an introduction letter to school teachers and principles explaining your child's condition.
- Be kind to the teacher and school officials.
- Do provide complete information on celiac disease or gluten intolerance to school officials, or provide links to websites where they can easily find this information. www.csaceliacs.org and www.gluten.net are great resources.
- Do provide lists of safe and unsafe snacks for your child.
- Do be willing to bring special snacks to have on hand just for your child. Store them in a Rubbermaid type container.

Don'ts

- **Don't** expect your school principle, nurse or teacher to become an instant expert on Celiac Disease or Gluten Intolerance. This is an unrealistic expectation, but do educate them with the most important things they need to know that affect your child as an individual.
- **Don't** expect the teachers/school officials to be as emotional as you are about this issue. It doesn't affect them and they do not know what you deal with from day to day.



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Do's

- **DO** be available to bring in snacks for school parties, help out in the classroom, answer questions, offer friendly suggestions and be hands on in your child's school experience. In fact all parents should do this whether they have children with special food issues or not.
- **Do** teach your kids what is safe and isn't safe.
- **Do** teach your kids to not be afraid to ask questions.
- **Don't** overreact if your child accidentally gets exposed. This can cause dissention between you and the school staff and can scare your child. Yes, getting exposed is serious and can cause serious reactions, but your child will not die from one accidental exposure. Try to educate the people involved so that they can learn from the experience and try their best to not allow it to happen again. Remember accidents can happen.
- **Don't** demand or expect that the teacher and other student parents provide safe snacks for your child. You can ask them to consider, but it may not be a realistic expectation for all parents and we don't know what personal situations they are in.



Sending Our Celiac or Gluten Intolerant Children to School Sample Principle/Teacher Letter

August 19, 2009

Dear Mrs. /Mr. Principal or teachers name.

Child's Name will be entering Child's grade this fall. She is very excited to start this new chapter in her life. Child's Name has been diagnosed with an auto-immune disorder called *Celiac Disease*. Celiac disease is a genetic disorder which causes him/her to have an auto-immune response when he/she comes in contact with anything containing Wheat, Rye, Barley, and Oats, resulting in damage to the small intestine as well as body rashes. When this happens it limits him/her body's ability to absorb important nutrients and for him/her to thrive. Symptoms vary from person to person with Celiac Disease. When Child's Name comes in contact with these grains he/she may experience rashes on his/her body, mainly cheeks and arms and buttocks, as well as vomiting, diarrhea, bloated stomach, stomach aches and irritability. **(Enter your child's specific reactions)**

It is very important to Child's Name and I that Child's Name have the most positive school experience possible. In order for this to happen we need to work with you and Child's Name's teacher to accommodate her special needs. It is equally important that we are able to do this in such a way that won't single him/her out or cause her to feel left out of normal classroom activities. I am more than willing to work with you and the teacher to provide education, information and ideas on how to make school a safe place for her.

Wheat, Rye, Barley and Oats can be hidden in many common things such as soaps, various school supplies and even common foods. I will do my best to provide lists that show what he/she can and cannot have. Also, considering children do bring in snacks to school, Child's Name will need to have his/her own snacks that will have to be store in safe containers and have no contact with gluten containing foods. It may help to send a note home to parents educating them on what foods are safe for Child's Name so that when special snacks are brought in they may consider bringing in snacks that would be safe for him/her too. I am also more than willing to provide cupcakes that we can keep in the school freezer for when birthday parties or classroom parties occur.

I look forward to working with you and Child's Name teacher this year to make this a fun and positive year for him/her. For more detailed information on Celiac Disease and Gluten Intolerance go to www.cseliac.org or www.gluten.net. Please feel free to contact me any time if you have any questions or any special requests. Thank you for your dedication to make Your school a safe nurturing environment for every child.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Email

Phone Number



Safe Snack List Ideas

SAFE SNACKS THAT ARE GLUTEN FREE

Fruit Snacks
Any Kind of Fruit or Vegetable
Raisins or any dried fruit
Rice Cakes
Cheese Sticks
Rice Crackers
Popcorn
Yogurt
Pudding (in small amounts)
Ice Cream (in small amounts)
Juice (Any kind)
Rice Krispie Treats (only if made from
Gluten Free Rice Krispies from Health
food store)
Most candies, see unsafe list below
Anything made with any of Gluten Free
Mama Flours/mixes or other Gluten
Free Mixes.

UNSAFE SNACKS

Cupcakes made with wheat flour
Cookies made with wheat flour
Fishy Crackers
Rice Krispie treats made with normal rice
krispies
Pretty much anything with wheat, rye, and
barley. Malt is a derivative of barley
Some store bought frostings. (Check labels)
Licorice, Twix, Kit Kat, Milky Way,
Snickers, Nestle crunch
Regular Bread
Fruit Loops, Cheerios, Rice Krispies,
actually most cereals.