

**A BEGINNER'S GUIDE
TO
LIVING GLUTEN FREE**

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INTRODUCTION

It would be nice if life was always easy, but often the most we can ask for is that it not be too complicated. Most of us work hard, take vacations, socialize with friends and hope everyone stays healthy along the way. Staying healthy usually means getting regular exercise and choosing low fat and nutritional foods. That's not too complicated. For many people though, food choices involve much more than picking low fat foods. That's because they have gluten intolerance or celiac disease.

Having gluten intolerance adds a level of consideration to food choices that other people don't have to worry about. If that seems like a terrible complication to you, then you need to keep reading. This book is going to show you how to transition to a gluten free life so you can feel better than you have for years.

So many diagnosed with gluten intolerance have suffered quietly with terrible digestive problems, feelings of malaise that have been baffling and distressing, and painful symptoms. If you are one of these people, what you are going to read is like a sail on a boat you are riding to safety through stormy seas. If you have come to fear eating, learned to avoid parties and dread facing holiday dinners, then your life is about to change in a way you had given up hope believing was possible. You're about to embark on a gluten free life.

Actually, there are probably plenty of you reading this book that were starting to think your imagination was causing the digestive problems, or they were all psychosomatic. After all, you've been to a dozen doctors and nothing improved. Many of the people diagnosed with either celiac disease or gluten intolerance had dealt with the symptoms most of their lives, knowing their bodies were not functioning properly, but unable to get a diagnosis. In fact, until fairly recently, the symptoms were often diagnosed as signs of irritable bowel syndrome, allergies, anorexia and a host of other illnesses. It turns out that many of the diagnosis were simply medical guessing.

It should feel great to know you are vindicated with a diagnosis of gluten intolerance or celiac disease. You were right all along! Something in your body was not working right and now you know why. After you read this book, you will also know the steps to take to make sure you get and stay healthy. This is cause for celebration!!

In all fairness, I must point out there is a learning curve in the medical field just like any area of study. Celiac disease and gluten intolerance had to be identified as a possible diagnosis first, before people could ever be identified as possible candidates. Just for the record, the term celiac disease will be used interchangeably with the term gluten intolerance (though the difference will be described later in the book). Medical studies, including intestinal biopsies, were

done on people with mysterious ongoing digestive problems or inexplicable symptoms like skin rashes. Serotology tests were performed on multitudes of patients. The results were tabulated, analyzed and studied and the gluten intolerance, or celiac disease, diagnosis was born.

I know how scary the word “disease” can be. I remember the first time the doctor confirmed I had Celiac disease. I was shocked and relieved at the same time. I was shocked I could now claim my own personal disease. I was relieved to know why I kept getting sick. Nobody likes being told they have a disease or even an “intolerance”.

A person discovering they have a disease goes through an emotional adjustment. It's a real roller coaster at first. They not only have a disease, but it's caused by a reaction to food. It's not a simple allergy either. It's a malabsorption problem that can have long-term consequences if not caught early enough. Celiac disease is also not curable. It's controllable, but not curable.

It is estimated that 1 in every 100 Americans has either celiac disease or gluten intolerance. Many of them remain undiagnosed. Fortunately, doctors and patients are learning more every day about the disease making it more recognizable as a potential diagnosis. You are one of the lucky ones, because you know what you have and can now begin a plan of action to improve the quality of your life. By reading this book, you can painlessly transition to a gluten free life and that will keep you healthy for years to come. There's no more mystery and that's great news.

Identifying celiac disease as early as possible is critical for the prevention of other health problems related to inadequate nutrition. If you don't get the right nutritional mix of vitamins, minerals and other elements day after day, it's not hard to predict the result. But not only will you get sick, you may experience the same problems undernourished people experience. If you "starve" your body for years, the results can be the development of other autoimmune diseases, bone loss, dental problems and even infertility, to name a few.

There are many issues related to having celiac disease. You have to completely eliminate gluten from your diet, but that's not as easy as it sounds. Did you know gluten's in the coating on pills? Did you know gluten's in gravy, on envelope flaps in the glue and in the beer you enjoy on the weekends? Did you know that cross-contamination of a cooking instrument can result in exposure to gluten?

If you have celiac disease, you are probably also wondering if you should tell your family and friends. After all, they will want to know why you aren't eating any birthday cake or a piece of their world-renowned pie. It can become a matter of balance between wanting to maintain your privacy and your health, and not hurting their feelings.

There are many decisions you must make as you settle into your gluten free life. You will need to adjust your lifestyle at home and at work. The Krispy Kreme donuts on the break room table become off-limits to you. You now get to watch the annoying co-worker in the cubicle next to yours enjoy your jelly-filled donut. At Thanksgiving, you can't eat the pies or the gravy or the stuffing. When you go to a restaurant, the menu will look like a hazardous waste sign instead of a list of delectable food items.

But before you think life as you know it has come to an end – think again! You will learn in this book that you can't eat Krispy Kreme donuts, but you can eat gluten free pastries. You can't eat traditional turkey stuffing made with white bread, but you can eat stuffing made with gluten free bread. You can't order the linguini in crème sauce at the restaurant, but you can order shrimp with roasted potatoes. Gluten free living is simply about making the right choices.

This book discusses the changes you must make in your life to eliminate gluten from your life. The good news is you can do it! Once you begin to feel good and your body functions like it was meant to function, the good health will be a reward in itself. You'll have to clean out gluten from your kitchen, know how to avoid gluten pitfalls, and learn to cook gluten free meals. It may be hard at first to adjust to living gluten free, but with the information and strategies provided in the following sections, you will find you will enjoy you life again.

If you are recently diagnosed with a gluten intolerance, I recommend you read the entire book. But if you have been living with gluten intolerance for a while and have some specific concerns, the book is written in a way that makes it easy to skip to the sections of interest. For example, if you want to learn how to talk to your doctor, go to page 32. If you need some assistance dealing with emotional issues related to gluten free living, skip to page 42. You might just need some advice as to the best approach for making your kitchen gluten free. In that case, you can go directly to page 49 and start evaluating your kitchen right away.

It's a brave new gluten free world you seek! Bon Voyage!

THE STARTING POINT

WHAT'S GOING ON WITH ME?

Digestive problems are no fun and can be hard to hide. Not only do you feel poorly, the problems can make themselves known in the most embarrassing ways. Bloating, burping and flatulence can be more than uncomfortable bodily responses to an internal problem. They can be downright painful.

If you have had these kinds of problems for years, there's a good chance you have an undiagnosed medical condition. Temporary gas or bloating, and occasional diarrhea are normal events for most people. But for many it's an ongoing problem that makes meal time something to avoid and not something to anticipate.

Normal digestion is the process whereby the body gets the nutrients it needs to operate efficiently. You eat food, swallow and the food passes down your esophagus into the stomach. In the stomach, food is mixed with stomach juices to make it digestible. The stomach creates a lot of gastric acid during this process for the purpose of killing bacteria in the food.

After the stomach does its job, the stomach-processed food is passed into the small and large intestines. During this process, the lining of the intestines absorbs nutrients and whatever is left over passes out of the body. If you don't have any digestion problems, you really don't feel anything during the process except for hunger satiation and eventual waste elimination.

There are other organs that contribute to the digestive process. They include the liver and gallbladder and the pancreas. The pancreas produces insulin and other enzymes which primarily break down proteins. The liver assists with fat digestion by producing bile and making food nutrients easier to pass from the intestines into the bloodstream. The gallbladder is the warehouse for bile until it's needed during digestion.

The small intestine is a major organ used for digestion. The food from the stomach passes into the intestine and from there the process of absorption begins. The lining of the intestine is covered with something called villi. They are the entry point for nutrients into the bloodstream.

The villi play a crucial role in maintaining good health. For one thing they release important enzymes that break down any undigested food that made it to the intestine. They also are responsible for preventing food bacteria or toxins from making it to the bloodstream. The villi are like little tubes and the nutrients pass through the tube into the bloodstream while being "cleansed" of unwanted elements such as parasites and bacteria.

When the body is absorbing food the important elements are being carried to the body's organs for sustenance. Carbohydrates, fats, proteins and minerals and vitamins are transported through the villi and into the bloodstream and then are used by the cells in the body.

Protein is an element in a variety of foods. There are different kinds of protein and the one you will be most interested in with celiac disease is the gliadin protein. This protein is in gluten and is hard to digest under the best of conditions.

So now you know in the most basic terms how the digestive system works. When everything is working like it should there's no real awareness of the whole process. Your body simply gets down to business and does its job keeping the cells nourished using food you supply.

When things begin to go wrong with digestion, you notice right away. Problems make themselves known with a vengeance. Your stomach becomes bloated or distended. You may be vomiting frequently or have a case of diarrhea every time you eat. Lack of nutrients can cause deficiencies such as a vitamin B or calcium that lead to other problems such as osteoporosis. You might notice a rash that comes and goes and is painful and itchy. You can also experience joint pain and weakness.

What you might notice also is that various symptoms come on slowly while others appear rapidly. Different people have different symptoms at different severities. It's hard to believe, but some people don't have any symptoms at all, or they have symptoms that don't seem to be related to digestion. The lack of nutrition often results in extreme weight loss, which is frequently misdiagnosed in teenagers as anorexia or bulimia. Some people notice an ongoing but mild case of acid reflux that makes eating an uncomfortable experience. There are even cases of people who experience no symptoms but eventually develop another disease due to the intestinal damage.

Of course, you may have severe digestive problems for years that never go away. Some people have suffered for a long time with gas, fatigue, rashes and other symptoms that have forced them into frequent doctor visits looking for an answer. If you experience any of the following categories of symptoms on a regular basis, you are a prime candidate for celiac disease testing.

- Diarrhea that occurs regularly
- Flatulence
- Painful bloating that is obvious
- Reflux
- Vitamin deficiencies despite eating balanced meals
- Fatigue
- Dermatitis Herpetiformis (skin rash)

When you notice these ongoing symptoms in yourself or your child, it's time to talk to the doctor about testing for celiac disease. This assumes nothing else has worked to relieve the symptoms.

PROBLEMS WITH SELF-DIAGNOSING

Everyone has tried to diagnose him or herself at some time. If you're like me, you don't like taking the time to go to the doctor and tend to wait until you believe there is a serious problem. Seeing a doctor is not anyone's idea of a good time.

When you have frequent digestive problems, it's tempting to consider them as easy to handle on your own. There are many shelves of do-it-yourself drugs on the drugstore aisles dedicated to relieving acid reflux, stopping diarrhea and settling stomachs. You may have tried one after the other and eventually admitted they weren't working.

Too many people go to the doctor, explain their symptoms and get no real help. You may be one of those who were told you have an allergy or food sensitivity. Some people are told they have psychological problems contributing to their physical misery.

In these situations, it's easy to fall into self-diagnosing which is a dangerous practice for many reasons. The symptoms related to celiac disease are the same symptoms related to other illnesses. One set of symptoms can hide the other set, which means the celiac disease often goes untreated.

When you focus on the wrong medical issue, the problems associated with celiac disease are left to continue unabated. This can have long-range consequences on your health including shortening your life span. You simply have no way to test for celiac disease on your own.

There's an old saying that no one should ever represent themselves or be their own lawyer. That saying should be expanded to include the premise that no one should act as their own doctor. You won't get any better, or arrest the damage to your intestines, by diagnosing yourself with the wrong medical problems.

There are a host of medical problems that have the same symptoms as celiac disease. Yet the treatment for them does not include testing for gluten intolerance. For example, Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a common diagnosis. It is a catchall diagnosis for symptoms related to the intestines that cannot be assigned to any other medical condition. The symptoms include diarrhea and bloating. Sound familiar?

A lot of people never actually go to a doctor to complain about their diarrhea or constipation problems. Instead, they get their information on the internet and self-diagnose. Treatments include eating more fiber or taking over the counter medications. In the meantime they continue to eat gluten and continue to injure the intestines.

Another common self-diagnosis is allergy. How many times have you or someone you know state they were allergic to a food but have never been tested. It's possible the allergy exists, but how do you know it's not celiac disease? How do you know the allergy is only an allergy?

For example, you may give up dairy products because you feel poorly every time you drink milk. You decide you are lactose intolerant. The result is now you don't get enough calcium and the celiac disease continues unabated. It's a double problem, because the malabsorption due to celiac disease is already preventing your body from getting enough calcium.

You may be constantly fatigued with only periodic bouts of diarrhea or vomiting. You issue the most common diagnosis of all in modern times: stress. Too many people glibly assign a host of physical and mental problems to stress. The cure is rest and relaxation, which won't help manage celiac disease, the real culprit.

One of the biggest problems people experience with celiac disease is getting a real and definitive diagnosis. Yet until the diagnosis of gluten intolerance is issued, you continue to eat bread, gravies, cakes and all the other food and drinks containing the gluten protein.

Of course, gluten is not always the problem. You may have celiac disease – you may not. Unfortunately, celiac disease predisposes you to other diseases. Sorting it all out is a job only a doctor can do. To try and self-diagnose is setting yourself up for a host of problems that can severely impact your health.

The longer celiac disease is allowed to go unchecked, the greater the chances you will develop other autoimmune diseases. Celiac disease itself is an autoimmune disease believed to be hereditary. In an autoimmune disease, your body is attacking itself. With celiac disease, the body destroys the villi in the intestine using the gliadin protein.

Gluten is treated like a foreign object in the body when you have celiac disease. The body goes into defensive mode and the intestines shut down the villi so the foreign bodies can't enter your bloodstream. The problem is that no other nutrients get through either, because eventually the villi flattens out. The tubes are no longer accessible.

If you self-diagnose and decide you have Irritable Bowel Syndrome, or food poisoning, or an allergy or a host of other problems then the real problem is not addressed. That means the real damage is not stopped either.

This is not intended to frighten you, but only to convince you that getting a valid diagnosis by a doctor is an important first step in the decision to live gluten free. After all, you probably don't want to eliminate gluten from your diet unless you have to do so.

FINDING THE RIGHT DOCTOR

If you have been to doctor after doctor trying to get a diagnosis for your condition, you're not alone. People with celiac disease are commonly given inaccurate medical advice and often because of stereotyping by the doctor or lack of current training. Women frequently must convince the doctor their ongoing anemia, headaches and digestive problems are not due to the menstrual cycle. Some doctors assume men who are overweight can't possibly have a digestion problem.

The medical profession never stands still. Research is relentless and new information is revealed about celiac disease regularly. The result is a rising awareness of the fact celiac disease affects millions of people. On the average, people are not diagnosed until they are somewhere between 40 and 60. That means many people live a good portion of their life dealing with the symptoms of celiac disease and not the problem.

If you suspect you have celiac disease, or don't feel you are getting the right diagnosis or assistance, it's time to find the right doctor. The right doctor will have specific qualities that lead to the right diagnosis or the right treatment of the symptoms so intestinal damage is minimized.

People with celiac disease may have different symptoms, but most have one thing in common – they had trouble finding the right doctor. Women are especially prone to be ignored. When you read the celiac forums, the same issues come up over and over again. They are issues like:

- My teenage daughter has lost thirty pounds and the doctor keeps saying it's anorexia
- Diarrhea persists but the doctor insists it's nothing to worry about
- The blood work showed elevated levels but not high enough to justify an endoscopy
- The doctor insists its psychosomatic or "all in the head"
- The doctor calls it just a minor case of IBS

If you believe you should be tested for celiac disease, the first thing you have to do is find a doctor who will listen to you. You need a doctor that will take your symptoms seriously and not be quick to assign them to the more commonly recognized digestive problems.

Finding the right doctor may take some hit-and-miss tactics. For example, you can get a recommendation from the local celiac support group. But if you go to

the doctor and he or she won't do the necessary diagnostic tests, it's time to find another doctor. You want a doctor that will listen to your story with an open mind and a willingness to take your medical condition seriously.

Unfortunately, many doctors are still not knowledgeable about celiac disease or gluten intolerance. Getting a referral from a celiac support group can help you avoid going from doctor to doctor, and if that's what it takes, it's worth the effort.

You know you have found the right doctor when you find one who takes your complaints seriously. If a doctor suspected you had cancer, he or she wouldn't hesitate to order MRIs and do plenty of blood work. It shouldn't be any different with celiac disease. But it might very well be up to you to insist the doctor do the necessary tests.

Celiac disease is not a disease for wimps!

GLUTEN SENSITIVITY VERSUS GLUTEN INTOLERANCE: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

There's a lot of terminology used on the internet. Words and expressions are used interchangeably and assumptions are made that the terms have the identical meanings. The fact is there are slight differences in definitions and meanings between the terms.

This section is intended to inform and not be a stickler for unimportant details. The most important fact is to know there is a difference between an allergy and an intolerance. The other terms used are sensitivity and disease. It's important to have a clear understanding of the terms so you can understand your doctor when he or she discusses your condition and treatment.

An allergy is a reaction to something like food or cosmetics. It is an immunological reaction that causes the body to produce antibodies. It is your body sending out defense troops to attack an invading army. The army is made of antigens and the defense troops are comprised usually of histamines. The presence of IgE in the blood indicates an allergy.

Almost everyone has an allergy to something. The reactions include inflammation, runny nose, rash, swelling and diarrhea. In other words, allergies produce the same symptoms seen with celiac disease, yet celiac Disease is not an allergy. There are other things going on in your body that are more serious including villi damage.

The word "sensitivity" is a very nonspecific term that indicates you are having a mild reaction to something such as food. When you are sensitive to something,

even gluten, it means you experience a non-damaging reaction. Obviously when you have celiac disease you are sensitive, but it's the disease feature that adds the damaging element. To find out if you are sensitive to anything, you stop using it and the symptoms disappear shortly.

You are gluten intolerant if you have celiac disease. On the other hand, you can be gluten intolerant – period. You don't have to have celiac disease to have gluten intolerance. An intolerance is like a sensitivity. You have a reaction to something like gluten and the body reacts. But when you are intolerant, the immediate cessation of exposure to the item like the gluten protein produces relief of the symptoms.

Celiac disease is a delayed autoimmune response. It's not an allergy, but it is a sensitivity or an intolerance. So if that's as clear as mud, then it's time to discuss what tests are done by doctors to determine if you have the full-blown, I'm-so-tired-of-being-sick, why-won't-you-take-me-seriously-doctor celiac disease.

TAKING THE CELIAC DISEASE TEST

Doctors are still learning about the best way to test for celiac disease, and only one is considered definitive – the intestinal biopsy. Since a biopsy is invasive it's considered as the last diagnostic alternative in many cases. Testing for celiac disease is done through blood work first which can lead to the biopsy for final verification the disease is present.

Serology (Blood) Tests

It's important to understand the serology, or blood work tests, can be negative and you still have celiac disease. If you have ongoing symptoms that fit the disease, the doctor may still order the biopsy even if all the blood testing results don't indicate you have celiac disease.

There are a variety of tests that can let a doctor know if you have celiac disease or whether you should have an intestinal biopsy. They are most often referred to by their acronyms. You should recognize the acronyms so you understand what you are reading when you do personal research on celiac disease.

Ig stands for immunoglobulins which are simply the antibodies produced by the body in reaction to toxins or bacteria. IgA is the immunoglobulin A and one of the specific antibodies produced by the intestines. The blood tests measure the amount of the IgA being produced in different ways.

- IgA tissue transglutaminase (tTG)
- IgA tissue endomysial antibodies (EMA)

- IgG tissue transglutaminase
- IgA antibodies
- IgC antibodies

For these blood tests to work you must be eating gluten on a regular basis. In effect, you are forcing your body into a reaction so the reaction can be measured. It can be a difficult time if you do have celiac disease or a strong intolerance because you might feel sick for a while. It's worth the effort though, because you get an answer about your condition.

The good news is the blood tests can prove you may have an intolerance issue or need a biopsy to show once and for all you have celiac disease. It's important to understand though the blood tests by themselves are not necessarily definitive. They are indicators of a problem like signs along a highway. You're not there yet, but at least know you're on the right track.

Biopsy and Endoscopy –The Definitive Test

When blood tests are positive, or show a strong likelihood you have gluten intolerance, the next step is a biopsy. Though the idea of a biopsy can be very scary, it's the gold standard for celiac disease testing.

A biopsy is painless, simple and gives a no-holds-barred answer. You can get an answer once and for all as to whether you have celiac disease. That's the thought you should hold once your doctor decides a biopsy is necessary. It's nothing to be afraid of under any circumstance. You need answers and this is the way to get them. The procedure is so simple that Europeans undergo the procedure without being put to sleep.

In an endoscopy, a tube with a scope is run through your mouth, down your esophagus and into your stomach. The doctor can actually look at the villi to see if it's flattened. A sample of intestinal tissue is taken to be studied in a lab. The results of the biopsy in conjunction with positive blood result can finally determine if you have celiac disease.

Sometimes, you will have to insist on a biopsy if your doctor is reluctant to believe the severity of your symptoms. This problem should get less frequent as celiac disease becomes more recognized as a commonly occurring disease. Until then, you must take the lead and be firm when you're not happy with a diagnosis. A biopsy is proof on paper there's intestinal damage.

There's one more point that should be made about the biopsy. Flattened villi does not always indicate celiac disease. Other diseases can damage villi too, including HIV, Crohn's disease and gastroenteritis. It's up to the doctor to

narrow the diagnosis to celiac disease. I don't know about you, but I'd rather know for sure what I have and not be making guesses about issues related to my health.

Skin Biopsy

Though the endoscopic biopsy is the most definitive way to determine if you have celiac disease or gluten intolerance, a skin biopsy can also result in a positive diagnosis. One of the symptoms of celiac disease is a skin rash called dermatitis herpetiformis. If a skin biopsy tests positive for dermatitis herpetiformis, you have celiac disease. You really don't need an intestinal biopsy unless the doctor says it should be done.

CAUSES OF GLUTEN INTOLERANCE

Once again, the terms celiac disease and gluten intolerance will be used interchangeably since you are intolerant when you have the disease.

Celiac disease is one of the most under diagnosed diseases in the medical profession. There are a lot of reasons for this including lack of knowledge. Simply put, many doctors still don't realize the prevalence of the disease. This is changing, but there's a long way to go.

Second, doctors don't always believe their patients when they describe the severity of the symptoms. As a result, in an effort to keep costs down, the necessary diagnostic testing is not ordered as often as it should be.

Also, as mentioned earlier, some people have very mild symptoms or no symptoms at all. You can't report something you don't even know is happening. In this case though, ignorance is not bliss, because the intestinal damage still occurs.

Fourth, and this is a major reason, other conditions with similar symptoms can hide the fact celiac disease exists. These include Irritable Bowel Syndrome, colitis and Crohn's disease.

The causes of gluten intolerance are under study and doctors still don't know for sure why some develop the problem. The studies to date have begun to piece the picture together, but there are still a lot of blanks. It appears so far to be the result of heredity and what you eat in early infancy.

Scientifically speaking, you have to have particular genes before celiac disease develops. It is believed at this point it is related to genes in chromosome 6 and

the HLA-DG2 antigens. The genes cause an immunological response to gluten proteins. But what the heck is HLA-DG2?

HLA-DQ2 is an antigen molecule in the intestines. The gliadin protein chains have been changed by the enzyme mentioned earlier – tTG. This alteration to gliadin makes it better able to bind with other proteins. The immune system antigens kick into high gear and begin destroying other cells in the area.

Not everyone with gliadin in their system and the antigens HLA-DG2 present develop celiac disease. That's part of the mystery. Research is investigating other factors that could be causes, or triggers, of gluten intolerance.

One such research result indicates that infants fed gluten before 4 months old are more likely to develop a gluten intolerance. Children who are breast fed don't develop celiac disease as frequently as those who are not breast fed. It is believed this may be due to the fact that breast milk has a lot of natural antibodies that protect the infant. Also, an infant's digestive system may not be fully developed enough when gluten is introduced before 4 months old. Mother's milk is proven once again to be the best milk for baby.

None of these relationships have been proven yet, but the research certainly has found a correlation between breast feeding and the age at which gluten is introduced, and the chances of developing celiac disease.

Another suspected cause of gluten intolerance is frequent intestinal infections, which cause permanent damage to the lining of the intestines. This damage allows the gliadin molecules (gluten) to pass into the bloodstream.

Someday, they will discover what causes celiac disease and gluten intolerance. Until then, it's most important to know the following:

- It is due partly to heredity
- Gluten must be present
- Introduction of gluten in diet before 4 months old increases the risk of developing celiac disease

So now you have been diagnosed as having gluten intolerance, or celiac disease. What next?

HANDLING THE DIAGNOSIS

The "cure" for gluten intolerance is to stop eating gluten. The problem is gluten seems to hide everywhere, which will be discussed later. Once you are diagnosed as having gluten intolerance, the reality of the situation must be faced head on.

The reality is you have a condition that will affect all aspects of their life, but that doesn't mean it's bad. It just means you must do some things differently.

Handling the diagnosis may be difficult initially. You might find yourself feeling depressed, sad or fearful. You might also feel very alone, because now you must strictly limit what you can eat. There's no more eating whatever is put in front of you on a plate. There's no more trying those tempting gluten-covered dishes you love to order at restaurants. Darn if you must now avoid birthday cake!

In addition, there are long term consequences of having celiac disease that must be understood if it's not controlled. For example, people with celiac disease have a higher mortality rate than those without celiac disease. People with gluten intolerance left unchecked have higher rates of intestinal cancer. They also are more likely to develop osteoporosis and other autoimmune conditions. What's important to remember at all times is the fact that these side affects of Celiac disease will occur only if you don't follow a gluten free lifestyle. The following sections of the book are going to do just that – give you a prescription for good health by teaching you how to live gluten free.

It can sound very grim when first diagnosed. You may be angry in the beginning or even depressed or wonder "why me?" But like most things in life, your attitude is going to make a big difference in how well you adjust to the diagnosis. A good attitude that recognizes your disease is controllable is going to decide whether you see yourself suffering or thriving.

Attitude is defined as a mental position or feeling with regard to a fact. The fact is you have gluten intolerance. The attitude is how you feel about that diagnosis. The mental position is how you decide to see yourself. Do you see yourself as finally having the key to living a healthy lifestyle? Or do you see yourself as abnormal, making it impossible for you to ever enjoy life?

Consider this fact. Many of the foods you are soon to learn are banned from your dietary plan are many of the same foods people intentionally avoid such as store bought corn dogs and pies. If you have the right attitude, you will see your diagnosis as the answer you needed to restore good health. All those problems you have suffered with for years can now be corrected just by choosing the right foods prepared without gluten exposure.

When you get the diagnosis, the first thing you should do is begin listening to your doctor immediately. Now that you know you cannot eat gluten without getting sick, you obviously need to eliminate gluten from your diet as quickly as possible. Though there will be a transition stage, it should be kept as short as possible so your body can begin healing.

There's no doubt about it. You need to make changes in your life to accommodate the intolerance, but these changes will soon become second nature.

You need to pamper yourself by making yourself tasty non-gluten recipes so you quickly see that gluten-free does not mean tasteless.

You also need to create a battle plan that you will keep you healthy the rest of your life. The first step is to get nutritional counseling by someone familiar with celiac disease. Though you could create your own dietary plan, the odds are it will become a list of safe foods. Eating the same thing day-in and day-out is likely to doom you to failure. You need variety in your diet and that's where a professional can help.

RUNNING THE GLUTEN FREE RACE

WHAT DO I DO NOW?

With gluten intolerance diagnosis in hand, it's time to make some changes in your life. Living gluten free will affect your life at home and at work, while traveling, and your social life. Don't jump to the conclusion this is automatically a bad thing. Change is not bad – it's justwell.....different. You need to do some things differently as a matter of safety to keep yourself healthy.

Creating a battle plan for the rest of your life means first evaluating your current dietary habits both at home and at work. It is recommended you begin keeping a journal of what you eat. Everything you cook, eat or prepare should be logged in your journal.

The journal may not have much meaning to you for a couple of weeks until you begin to learn which foods contain gluten and which are safe to eat. Once you begin to understand what items, not just food, may represent exposure to gluten it becomes possible to make obvious and more subtle changes.

Too many people are handed a gluten intolerance diagnosis by their doctor while being handed a lot of material to read. If you are one of these people, you were sent home to fend for yourself until your next doctor appointment. If you get nutritional counseling, you are ahead of the game. Nutritional counseling is about more than just deciding what foods have no gluten. It's about establishing a balanced dietary plan eating gluten free foods while insuring you are getting the nutrients, vitamins and minerals your body needs.

It's critical you understand that your body has been literally injured by eating gluten. You may be one of the people with severe symptoms, or one of the people

who shows very few symptoms. Either way, your body has been suffering on the inside. Like any injury, you need time to heal and you need to eat foods that help you heal and stay healed.

The second step to making changes in your life is having your current medications evaluated. Many of the prescription and over-the-counter medications have a coating that contains gluten. This includes vitamin and mineral supplements also.

At this point, you may be starting to realize that living gluten free will take some attention and dedication to the details in your life. Gluten hides in so many items – food and non-food. It's everywhere and your job is to determine where it's hiding in your life. You must think carefully about everything you eat from this point forward. No more indiscriminate tasting of new foods. There will be no more doing "the same old thing". All your food must be evaluated in terms of whether it contains gluten.

The best place to begin making the changes in your life is at home. Not only is it where you eat the most often, it's where you will be most comfortable making changes. It's the best place to start in preparation for coping in the "real world".

MAKING ADJUSTMENTS AT HOME

The first step to adjusting to your gluten free life at home is to view your home with a new gluten-free eye. Everything that can be ingested or absorbed through the skin is initially suspected. The best place to start is in the kitchen.

There are several issues related to creating a gluten free kitchen. The first step is to evaluate what food items are in your pantry right now that contain gluten. If you cook for your family, you will have to decide if everyone will be eating gluten free meals, or if you will be cooking separate dishes.

If it works for your family, the easiest plan to follow is cook gluten free for the entire family. That way you can give away or throw away any food containing gluten. Otherwise, you'll have to clearly mark those items containing gluten. That means learning what grains are safe and what grains are unsafe. You also must learn the different ingredients that are different names for gluten containing grains.

The next change you should make at home is creating a storage space for cooking equipment to be used only for gluten free cooking. Cross contamination is one of the more subtle problems that must be addressed in order to make a kitchen gluten free.

When you have celiac disease, the goal is to eliminate all exposure to gluten. You don't want to even eat a trace of gluten. Living gluten free means just that – free

of gluten. Even an 1/8 teaspoon of wheat flour can cause measurable intestinal damage. So you don't want to eat any gluten and you don't want to cook on or with anything that might have gluten traces.

The possibility of cross contamination is an issue you must always be aware exists. Cross contamination includes two areas. The first is kitchen equipment that has been used with food containing gluten. The second area is non gluten containing food exposed to, or mixed with, gluten containing food.

The food cross contamination can be a murky subject. A good example is oats. Oats were once considered unsafe, but research has shown they are safe for most people with celiac disease. But oats are often grown together with wheat, which creates cross contamination. If you are highly sensitive to gluten, a trace of wheat in oats can cause intestinal inflammation.

Any food you keep in your pantry should either have no gluten containing ingredient or should be labeled gluten free.

Maintaining a gluten free kitchen means eliminating chances of cross contamination by insuring gluten does not get accidentally eaten. For starters, you should have some equipment that is clearly marked in some way as dedicated to gluten-free cooking or eating. Following are some ideas to help you establish your gluten free living kitchen.

- Have a separate set of cooking utensils clearly identifiable and stored separately from other cooking utensils. One idea is to purchase gluten-free kitchen equipment in a color that tells everyone it's to be used only for gluten free cooking. For example, buy a spatula with a bright blue handle. Or buy a cutting board with a design.

If you don't want to purchase new equipment, then make sure you mark the designated utensils in an obvious way. For example, use a permanent marker and write "gluten free" on the utensil.

- Store your gluten free utensils in a separate drawer or cabinet.
- Always wash anything that will touch your food during preparation. That means wipe down counters, sinks, cutting boards, colanders and so on.
- Buy separate appliances that will be used for only gluten free cooking. For example, buy a toaster and mark it gluten free.
- Don't ever double-dip using kitchen utensils. For example, don't use the same knife to make a gluten filled peanut butter and jelly sandwich and then use the same knife to make your gluten free peanut butter and jelly.

- Keep a separate supply of gluten free ingredients and foods on hand so you're not tempted to "binge eat" food with gluten.

Making adjustments at home for gluten free living also includes teaching your family or partner about the gluten free rules. It won't do you any good to separate all the utensils if a family member doesn't know to stay away from using the blue-handled spatula when you're not watching.

Since you are the one with the gluten intolerance, you'll have to help your family adjust to the requirements of your disease maintenance plan. You should make it as easy as possible for them to remember what foods, kitchen appliances and utensils are for only you.

The kitchen is not the only place you need to evaluate in your home. Evaluate your medicine cabinet for medicines and supplements that might contain gluten. You'll probably have to call your doctor or the drug manufacturer to find out if the products are gluten free.

You will also have to consider all the other products normally purchased at the drugstore. Many of them could contain gluten. These include:

- Toothpaste
- Acid indigestion tablets
- Cough syrup
- Laxatives
- Lip balm
- Nasal sprays

Once again, you might have to contact the manufacturer to determine if the product contains gluten.

The next stop in your house is the cosmetic drawer. When you read the forums, there's a lot of concern about whether gluten is in makeup and lotions and whether it can be absorbed through the skin.

Many lipsticks contain gluten because they are made with wheat germ oil or some other wheat-based ingredient. Lipstick gluten can be ingested by licking your lips. Many people would not experience a gluten reaction to such miniscule exposure, but as discussed earlier, your goal is to eliminate all traces of gluten from your life. I always follow the age-old advice that says it's better to be safe than sorry.

Lotions and powders can contain gluten also, but the gluten molecules are too big to be absorbed by the skin. Foundations, lotions, creams and conditioners should be safe to use. The only exception is those who suffer from dermatitis herpetiformis, the skin rash that occurs due to having gluten intolerance or celiac disease.

If you suffer from dermatitis herpetiformis, lotions or creams containing wheat germ oil or wheatgrass or barley grass can possibly aggravate the skin condition. If you find they do, then stop using them immediately.

You'll discover when you first begin evaluating your home to make it gluten-free, you'll have to either call manufacturers frequently or spend time doing internet research. Many companies list online all the ingredients in their products. Once you narrow down those products which are safe to use you won't have to spend quite as much time doing research. Research will be required when you want to use a new product.

As you can see, making adjustments at home means evaluating everything you ingest or apply to your body. This even includes some items you won't think about right away. For example, many glues on envelope flaps or on stickers contain gluten. If your child is gluten intolerant, the crayons may contain gluten. Since children like to put things in their mouths, items like gluten filled crayons can cause a serious problem.

Once your home is ready for living a gluten free life, it's time to evaluate your work place.

MAKING ADJUSTMENTS AT WORK

Where you work can be the greatest source of temptation to cheat if you don't prepare ahead of time. At work, you are confronted with break rooms full of forbidden foods, office refrigerators stored with food co-workers brought to share, vending machines loaded with gluten filled foods and business meetings serving pre-prepared food. Also, you can't go to the kitchen when you're hungry and cook special meals.

You should take the time to evaluate your working conditions the same way you evaluated your home. And you should also be prepared for business meetings, work parties and all the other situations revolving around food. I didn't think about what a very food-oriented society we live in until I had to think about all situations where food is involved. We serve food at weddings, funerals, parties, and informal gatherings, graduations and at business meetings.

Following are some ideas for making the work place gluten free.

- Make sure your desk is cleared of all snacks containing gluten
- Bring gluten free snacks from home stored in specially marked containers
- Explain to your boss and co-workers how important it is to never cross contaminate your food or containers with their utensils
- If possible, keep a small refrigerator in the office break room that is strictly for your food (put a sign on it to explain why you are so privileged to avoid hard feelings)
- Normally, you shouldn't eat foods from vending machines because most vending machine foods typically contain gluten
- Plan in advance for business luncheons and dinners

Being prepared to deal with business luncheons and dinners means being ready to order a fruit salad while everyone else is eating a gravy covered steak or pasta, unless you recognize menu items as being prepared gluten free. But the good news is you can pat yourself on the back for eating healthy food while everyone else will probably be later regretting the fattening food they ate. The best thing to do is eat a gluten free meal before the business meal so you're full. Then eat very lightly at the business meal itself.

When possible, try calling ahead to the place serving the meal and explain your gluten intolerance. With the growing awareness of gluten intolerance, many restaurants and caterers are able to accommodate special diets.

Another adjustment you should consider making at work is learning what you can eat at restaurants in the area. You can study the places your co-workers and you will most frequently eat at or call for delivery orders. You can learn which menu items are gluten free by calling the restaurant or the corporation that owns the restaurant.

Now that you are mentally and physically prepared to stay gluten free at home and at work, it's time to consider other situations that will test your ability to remain gluten free.

MAKING ADJUSTMENTS AT OTHER PEOPLE'S HOMES

We will be discussing how to deal with social occasions such as parties later in the book. But you need to be prepared for even those random visits to your neighbor's house or to see your mother. If you have had a tradition of eating

snacks or munching while visiting even for a short while, your snacks will have to be planned ahead.

The solution is to take your snacks with you. When your mother or friend sets the box of wheat crackers and cheese on the counter, you will be prepared to reach into your purse or backpack and pull out gluten free snacks. These kinds of spur-of-the-moment visits are fraught with danger, because it's too easy to be tempted to eat just a little. Remember, your goal is to eliminate all gluten from your diet.

MAKING ADJUSTMENTS FOR TRAVEL

Travel can occur for both social and business reasons. When you travel on vacation there's plenty of time to plan ahead for meals and snacks. Business travel often occurs sporadically and with little warning. If you were just diagnosed with gluten intolerance or celiac disease, and travel for business regularly, it's necessary to immediately prepare for sudden trips. If you have known you are gluten intolerant for a while, the following suggestions may help you travel safely without fear of getting sick.

- Carry a letter from your doctor stating you are gluten intolerant or have celiac disease and are on a restricted diet
- Carry a "gluten free" card that explains your dietary requirements in the language of the country you are visiting
- Carry gluten free snacks with you at all times so you never have to go hungry
- If there's enough time, call ahead to hotels and restaurants and ask for special dietary accommodation
- Research which restaurant chains and hotels serve gluten free foods to make choosing accommodations on the road easier
- Prepare a "trip bag" that has everything you need ready to go on a moment's notice including gluten free dried snacks, lipstick, lotions, explanation cards, lists of safe foods etc.
- Only order food at a restaurant that is bare with no coatings or gravies

Travel for a person with gluten intolerance can be very scary, because you are forced to leave the comfort of your kitchen. In your own home you know what is safe to eat and what contains gluten.

When you travel, there's never 100% assurance the plate of food the waiter set in front of you has no gluten. The best protection you can give yourself is to always order your food with no breading, coatings, gravies or sauces. If you order your food plainly cooked or only order food that's fresh and as close to its natural state as possible, you greatly limit your chances of inadvertently eating gluten.

If you discover you accidentally eat gluten, the advice I offer is this: don't panic! Getting upset won't solve anything. There's bound to be mistakes made every now and then, and you can recover just like you did in the past.

WHEN OTHERS IN YOUR LIFE ARE NOT GLUTEN SENSITIVE

Gluten sensitivity is one of those health issues that can be difficult for other people in your life to understand. If you are one of those who have been very sick, losing weight, experiencing skin rashes and so on, the diagnosis makes sense to others. If you are gluten sensitive but show little outward sign of health problems, other people may have a harder time understanding the issue.

It's easy for other people in your life to believe you are just fine. Like some doctors, there's not much sympathy for perceived "allergies" which is how many will categorize the disease. When you begin your gluten free race to good health, the journey can be arduous at first if you don't have strong willpower.

For one thing, you will have to deal with others who want to tempt you by offering food containing gluten. Their lack of understanding of the disease makes them want to "prove" to you that you might be wrong about your nutritional plan. Others will be supportive and you just need to be grateful for their support.

One of the biggest challenges you'll face is living with family that are not gluten sensitive, or spending time with friends who have no gluten intolerances. You will have a kitchen that has cabinets and shelves that are off-limits to everyone else. You might even be faced with cooking foods you can't eat. A trip to the grocery store is no longer mere shopping. It becomes a fishing expedition where you hope to hook some good tasting gluten-free food by evaluating ingredients. The feelings of isolation can be overwhelming at times.

When on a diet, there are always those who want to tempt you with sugar loaded food or fast food. When you are trying to give up caffeine, they make coffee that sends aromas wafting your way. When you want to quit smoking, some people

will insist on offering you a cigarette. When you can't eat gluten, they want to serve you cake.

If we were psychologists we'd probably decide these thoughtless acts are actually signs of guilt on their parts. But whatever the reason, you will have to deal with the same kinds of temptations in your life concerning gluten initiated by others in your life. You may feel sadness that you can't share the office party food. You may feel some anger over the fact you won't be able to eat Thanksgiving dressing like everyone else. You may resent the fact you can't enjoy a buttered muffin with your husband at breakfast.

First, you need to understand these feelings are perfectly normal. Many of us who transition to gluten free living go through these emotions. But what you will quickly learn over a short period of time is you can enjoy your food just as much as everybody else is enjoying their food. My gluten free buttered muffins are so good that I make them for my entire family. My friend, who has gluten intolerance, eats the fresh vegetables on party trays at office events. Then she congratulates herself on eating healthy foods.

When others in your life are not gluten sensitive, the key to maintaining a gluten free life is always being willing to keep a positive attitude. It's not good to let yourself become a resentful silent martyr. Instead, consider what explanations you are willing to give others, and eventually people will come to accept how serious you are about living gluten free.

When you are diagnosed with gluten sensitivity, your lifestyle patterns will change and that will affect your family and friends. You may even have to give up some important food traditions enjoyed on holidays or at family events. Your immediate family or partner will have to understand how critical it is to keep your gluten free appliances and utensils free of gluten. They will have to be educated so they become partners in helping you maintain good healthy.

Most of all you will have to let them know when something is too hard for you to deal with like a sane person. If chocolate cake is your passion, you certainly cannot watch your husband eat a big, gooey piece of fudge cake with fudge icing. Take heart, because eventually you will be learning how to cook a gluten free chocolate cake. The transition phase into a gluten free life is the hardest part of the whole process.

It is highly recommended that your family at home learn to eat the same foods as you. Eliminating gluten from a diet cannot harm anyone and might actually make some unsuspecting people who have allergies feel better. Whatever is good for you to eat will be good for them to eat also. The same is true for your friends. If you eat meals with friends or neighbors, feed them what you eat. You'll be amazed at how quickly you no longer feel isolated.

You will also be amazed at how supportive people will be once they understand that eating gluten will make you sick at the least and eventually shorten your lifespan at the worst. Just persevere!

YOUR SOCIAL LIFE AND BEING GLUTEN FREE

SHOULD YOU TELL OTHERS?

You can probably find every opinion under the sun as to whether you should tell others about your need to live a gluten free life. Some people are stoics and don't want anyone to know their personal business. Other people are talkers and will tell anyone who wants to listen putting themselves at the risk of social ostracism. After all, who wants to hear about the same problem over and over and over again?

The best approach, like most things in life, is to find a happy medium. You need to tell the people you live with of course, but you also need to tell others on a need-to-know basis. That's a lot of "needs", but your situation is fluid. You don't want to run around announcing to the world you have celiac disease or are gluten intolerant. You do want to tell those people in your life who should know so they can form a support system for your new lifestyle.

Being gluten intolerant is not a one-time event. It's a lifelong condition you must learn to live with comfortably. That means you must tell selective others you have gluten intolerance or gluten sensitivity or celiac disease. That's the only way they can help you succeed, and people who love you certainly want you to stay healthy.

Even people who don't know you would normally not intentionally do anything to harm you. The way to look at the situation is gluten is harmful. Feeding you gluten causes you injury and pain. Gluten is a proverbial weapon that inflicts damage on your body. Telling others you can't eat gluten lets them know boundaries.

To be honest many people have never heard of gluten, or if they have, they don't know anything about the protein. You will have to explain over and over again what you have, what you can't eat and what will happen if you do ingest gluten. You can practice your explanations on your family and friends first. Once you feel comfortable talking about your condition in front of others, and can readily answer questions, you can begin to tell others such as people you work with every day.

- Tell your immediate family and explain the situation and the consequences of gluten exposure. But also tell them what you are feeling when you watch them eat your favorite foods that you can't eat.
- Explain your food limitations in understandable terms to your children. They need to learn to not cross contaminate your specially marked food items in the refrigerator or cupboards with utensils that have touched food with gluten.
- Explain your disease or intolerance to your boss as a minimum and to co-workers if necessary. They should know why you cannot be exposed to gluten and why you need a special corner in the break room or refrigerator for storing your food. Your business associates should also understand your diet limitations so at business lunches or dinners they understand you're not being "picky" or "difficult".
- Explain to strangers such as waiters or chefs on a need-to-know basis in order to be served food that is free of gluten.
- You probably won't tell people at parties unless you are comfortable sharing your medical conditions and they have asked for more information. Chatting with others can actually be a great chance to spread the word about the possible hazards of eating gluten. During the party all you have to do is either not eat the party food or eat the gluten free snacks you brought on the sly.

WHAT SHOULD YOU TELL OTHERS?

You will discover that once you're diagnosed as gluten intolerant, you'll have to learn how to answer questions under pressure and with much grace and tact. People have a way of saying things that can be downright tacky, but not necessarily with any intention of malice. People love gory details. They can actually revel in other's misfortunes just because it's happening to someone else and not them.

When you tell people you have an intolerance or disease, the first reactions are often aversion and then curiosity. The term "disease" evokes images of monsters and wasted bodies. Once the people who are asking the questions understand your intolerance or disease is controllable and certainly not contagious, they'll want to ask questions. What should you tell others?

First, don't bother to give the details of your gluten reactions unless the conversation is being held privately, and you believe the questioner is serious about getting a complete answer. The symptoms and side effects of gluten

intolerance and celiac disease are often not good conversation except between doctor and patient, or between friend and friend. Strangers may not want to hear about diarrhea, gas or intestinal villi unless they have a personal interest. You have to learn to read the situations and go with the flow.

Appropriate responses to general questions about the sensitivity or intolerance can be vague many times. You can say, "It's like an allergy and causes stomach pain and skin conditions." Or you can say, "I really don't think you want to hear the details." You might not want to say, "I could develop a serious case of diarrhea that also cause terrible bloating followed by vomiting." At least don't respond in that matter unless you really don't want to be invited back again. In that case, gory details are the perfect response!

When you are diagnosed with gluten intolerance you must tell the immediate people in your life what you have and how it affects your life. Beyond that it's a case-by-case situation. If you don't have to tell – then don't! If you do want to tell, then go ahead and tell. Just tell with some style!

HANDLING QUESTIONS ABOUT BEING GLUTEN FREE

People are naturally curious. You will be inundated with questions about your gluten intolerance or sensitivity. Let's face it; some questions will simply be nosy. On the other hand, some questions will be serious inquiries intended to gather information. Celiac disease and gluten intolerance is still not a widely recognized condition and so people want to know what it's all about.

You have two options when someone asks you questions about being gluten free. You can refuse to answer, which won't earn you any friends. Or you can answer truthfully but without the awful physical details you endure. As discussed in the previous section, it's probably not the best idea to describe the results of eating gluten to people in a social setting including small groups of friends. But you can describe in general terms that eating gluten produces gastrointestinal problems.

At that point, you can follow the lead of the questioner. This is your chance to provide important information about your condition and for use by the person expressing interest. The one thing you don't want to do is whine. Nobody likes to listen to a whiner. If that sounds harsh it's only pointed out in order to help you adjust to your situation without losing friends!

If you get questions about what you can eat and how the gluten intolerance has affected your life, your answers should be truthful. But you will still get questions that imply the person asking still doesn't understand the depth of the problem. You're served a piece of pie you must refuse, and the hostess insists you eat

everything except the crust. That indicates they don't truly understand you can't eat anything that has been near gluten.

The answers to questions about gluten intolerance should be designed to inform and instruct. You can explain the differences in terminology. You can answer questions about cross contamination. You can describe the kinds of foods you can eat. You can explain about celiac forums, support groups and online resources. Just don't let anyone get too personal or feel sorry for you. The last thing you need is pity.

The most difficult questions to handle will be the ones that indicate the person thinks you're exaggerating. For example, "I don't see why you can't eat just a little wheat flour. Are you sure you were diagnosed correctly?" Or they may ask, "Are you sure you can't eat this? I spent 2 hours making it just because I know how much you love this dish." The answer should always be simple, but informative.

The goal of answering questions about gluten intolerance is to help people treat you the way you need to be treated. There's that word again – "need". You are not needy in the sense you require something to live, but you are needy in the sense you need your food to be handled carefully. If someone asks you why you can't eat the casserole, and all you say is "because I can't", how will he or she know what to cook or not cook next time?

DEALING WITH THE HOLIDAYS

The holidays are busy times where you are prone to eat and run trying to get all the errands done in time. Holidays are also events that frequently center on food for the celebration. This is true for religious and non-religious holidays. Christmas, Thanksgiving, Halloween, Valentine's Day and Fourth of July are just a few of the holidays that have traditional food requirements.

When you have a gluten intolerance, the holidays become more complex than they are normally (hard to believe!). The complexity centers on the food traditionally cooked and served, but also prevailing family attitudes. Every family has a grandmother or mother or aunt or uncle who makes his or her famous dish every holiday. They spend hours talking about assembling it and then more hours actually cooking.

When you are diagnosed with gluten intolerance, you now must explain to your mother or Aunt Sally that you can no longer eat their world famous turkey dressing or pumpkin pie. You can't have the gravy, breaded vegetables or homemade rolls. You can't sip the special beer Uncle Louie bought just for the family. You are unable to eat the Halloween or Valentine candy either.

The worse problems during these times are often related more to the reactions of your family members rather than your inability to eat certain foods. You might not mind giving up the turkey dressing, but your mother's feelings could be hurt. After all, as she points out, it's a secret family recipe and part of the family tradition. So now you can't participate and she wants to understand why.

During the first holidays when your family is in training to be your "gluten free lifestyle" enablers, there may be hurt feelings and lots of explanations required. You might have to explain multiple times why you can't eat foods with gluten. You most likely will have to be firm and unrelenting until you are able to make your family understand that gluten to you is like sugar to a diabetic – dangerous!

There are several steps you can take to make the holidays as "normal" as possible without risking your health.

- You can offer to cook some of the food so you know for a fact you'll have gluten free food at the holiday dinner
- You can give or send all the family you normally see at that holiday meal information about gluten intolerance to help them understand
- You can bring gluten free versions of certain food or drink items you know will prevent you from appearing to be uncooperative or left out, i.e. gluten free beer, gluten free candy, gluten free desert and so on
- You can tell your special someone or partner before the holiday you'll appreciate flowers much more than candy (it's hard to turn down candy bought with love)
- You can call whoever is doing most of the holiday cooking long before the actual day and ask what is being cooked and if it's all right to bring your gluten free versions
- You can be prepared to provide gluten free recipes if the holiday cooker asks for help making gluten free dishes

If it sounds like being gluten intolerant has complicated your world, and especially the holidays – you're right! Fortunately they are simple complications (see, I told you so in the very beginning). The whole point is you can avoid a lot of problems with your family and friends if you prepare in advance. Just showing up at your mom's house announcing you can't eat most of the food anymore is a recipe for disaster and a ruined holiday.

There is one issue that can become major during the holidays for someone with celiac disease or gluten intolerance. If you like to drink during the holidays, just be aware that when inhibitions are reduced you'll be more susceptible to binge eating. In other words, your guard will be down and it'll be harder to say "no

thanks" to cousin Molly's cherry pie – you know – the pie she baked using cherries she pitted all by herself.

DEALING WITH SPECIAL EVENTS

Special events are like holidays except you may not have to deal with your mother's hurt feelings. A special event may be a banquet, a wedding reception, a business meeting or a neighborhood party. Any of these kinds of events are out of the ordinary and almost always include tables loaded with food you can't eat.

Special events normally include either pre-determined menus where you have no say as to what you are served, or buffet tables. Though it may seem a buffet table is a better choice, the problem of cross contamination is huge. Even if the foods look like foods you can eat, such as fresh fruit salad, how do you know a gluten covered ladle had not been used? And what's in that glaze coating the ham? How was that bean dish thickened like that? Well, you get the idea.

At special events almost all food is suspect. That means you are attending an event that has eating as the centerpiece or highlight of the occasion and you fear for your very health. During times like these is when you can feel very isolated and resentful if you allow those feelings to express themselves.

There are ways to handle special events that will help you be prepared and have some fun like everyone else. First, you can call ahead whenever possible and ask what's being served. If they aren't serving anything you can eat, ask if it's possible to add gluten free dishes. Buffets normally have a wide selection of food and there's bound to be something you can eat.

You can also try to be one of the first ones in line to eat at a buffet table. That way you know utensils have not been used in multiple dishes yet. You can carry snacks to special events too. Some gluten intolerant people carry their own gluten free piece of cake to wedding receptions. They quietly slip it onto a wedding dish and are then able to eat cake just like everyone else.

Of course, you may be one of the people who can simply enjoy a special event for the people or entertainment and not for the food. If you make sure you are full before you go to the event, you're much less likely to feel left out. You can simply explain you're not hungry when someone asks and then enjoy the company.

If you are served food you can't eat, just push it around a bit on the plate and try to make it look like you ate lightly. At special events, most people are concerned with their own plates and not yours.

Your social life does not have to change once you're diagnosed with gluten intolerance. It's what you eat that changes. Your biggest concerns during the

holidays or special events should be: 1) accidentally eating food with gluten, and 2) enjoying yourself even if you can't eat everything.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AS A GLUTEN FREE PATIENT

FINDING A DOCTOR WHO CARES

Obviously, when you have gluten intolerance or celiac disease, you are faced with a lifetime of dedicated nutritional maintenance to keep gluten out of your life. Also obviously, gluten is bound to sneak into your diet every now and then no matter how vigilant you manage to be. And of course, any disease needs to be monitored.

Anyone with gluten intolerance, sensitivity or celiac disease needs a physician for several reasons.

- Monitor the healing of the body after you stop eating gluten
- Monitor the development of other autoimmune diseases
- Handle the day to day concerns related to gluten intolerance
- Act as a resource for new medical information related to gluten intolerance
- Provide medical care when you have a gluten reaction

You need to spend time determining who will be the right doctor for your needs. You will be relying on this person to help you stay healthy and you need to choose a doctor that communicates well. Given the number of doctors who still don't recognize how common celiac disease or gluten intolerance is among the general population, you also want a doctor who will take you seriously. Otherwise, you'll spend your appointment time trying to convince your doctor there's a problem instead of dealing with the problem.

With a gluten intolerance problem, you need a specialist such as an internist or a gastroenterologist. One of the issues you must consider also is insurance. You should probably choose a doctor who is covered by your medical insurance. To find a doctor experienced in managing gluten intolerances, you can contact your insurance company or check the celiac forums for recommendations. You can also call the American Medical Association and see if they have any specialists listed for your area.

Even after you choose a doctor, if you're not satisfied with the care you receive after a few visits, you can always look for a new doctor. Many times people stick with a particular doctor because it's an inconvenience to find a new doctor. You should be able to ask for diagnostic tests if the care you're getting isn't keeping you healthy. You should be able to tell your doctor anything to do with your symptoms and have them taken seriously. You should get your test results within a reasonable period of time, and the doctor should have a responsible staff.

If it sounds like you should expect a lot from your doctor – you're right again. That's because gluten intolerance is not a run-of-the-mill cold or flu. It's a medical condition that needs constant monitoring by you and your doctor. One of the most effective ways to keep track of your daily diet is through a food journal.

KEEPING A FOOD JOURNAL

It's important to realize that a gluten intolerance affects all the systems in your body. For those who don't have gluten sensitivity, a rash may be something simple like a reaction to a plant such as poison ivy. A skin rash on a person with celiac disease indicates intestinal damage is probably occurring also. Joint swelling can be osteoarthritis or it can be a symptom of a new autoimmune disorder developing.

When visiting the doctor, you want to be able to show everything you ate including food, vitamins and minerals. But you also want to list all the physical problems you experienced since your last visit. By listing food eaten and symptoms in order of occurrence, it may be possible to identify any foods aggravating your condition.

Your food journal should be complete. It must include every food item you eat and when you eat it to be effective. You should also be detailed in your description of symptoms, digestive problems and any other physical conditions that are abnormal including inability to sleep.

The food journal will be used by you and the doctor to monitor your lifestyle and to identify gluten reactions. But it will also be used to determine if there are other problems developing as a result of the gluten intolerance or celiac disease. The food journal is the ongoing "photo album" of your eating and digestive life.

There's one other thing your journal should include. It should include comments and questions that occur as you make entries in the journal. There's no way you will remember all your questions when you visit the doctor unless you write them down. The food journal is the best place to accumulate the questions.

Show your doctor the journal on your first visit. You should ask him or her if there's anything else you should be logging. The journal will be your lifeline to the doctor over time. It will be instrumental in insuring you get continuity of care over the years ahead and will be extremely useful whenever you change doctors.

HOW TO SPOT GLUTEN IN FOODS AND OTHER PRODUCTS

Gluten can be an elusive protein form the sense that it is in a variety of grains with unusual names. It's also in additives in processed food. To complicate the situation, there are certain names for dishes that you can be assured have gluten because of the ingredients they require. It's a lot to sort out, but take heart that as time passes, it gets easier as you move along the learning curve.

Grains

Some grains are safe and some are not to be eaten under any condition. Learning the names of the grains you can and can't eat will help you spot gluten in food. The new labeling laws have made it clearer which foods are guaranteed to be gluten free. But some foods are safe to eat and are not marked as gluten free. You can tell by the ingredients in some cases if you understand what acceptable grains are.

Grains that are safe to eat because they don't contain the gluten protein include the following.

- Rice (white, brown, and wild)
- Corn
- Buckwheat (called kasha after roasting)
- Amaranth
- Quinoa
- Millet
- Sorghum
- Manioc
- Cassava

There is a caveat to this "safe" list. These grains are considered safe, because they are naturally gluten free. But they only remain safe as long as there is no cross contamination with any unsafe grain.

Unsafe grains include the following. They are never safe for someone with gluten intolerance because they contain the gluten protein.

- ┆ Wheat (grain, germ, bran)
- ┆ Barley
- ┆ Couscous
- ┆ Rye
- ┆ Bulgur
- ┆ Spelt
- ┆ Kamut
- ┆ Semolina
- ┆ Triticale

Words That Mean Gluten

There are some words on labels that mean gluten is present in the product. Gluten is a protein that is present in certain grains. Derivatives made from those grains will contain the gluten protein. You can spot gluten in food if you recognize these words.

- ┆ Dextrin
- ┆ Hydrolyzed vegetable protein
- ┆ Diglycerides
- ┆ Citric acid
- ┆ Modified food starch
- ┆ Malt
- ┆ Hydrolyzed plant protein

- ┆ Maltodextrin
- ┆ Soy Sauce
- ┆ Starch
- ┆ Dorum flour

This is not a complete list by any mean, but these are the most common terms used on labels that indicate gluten is present in the food product.

Food Descriptions that Indicate Gluten Proteins Are Present

- ┆ Food titles that say "thickened"
- ┆ Au Gratin
- ┆ Beef Wellington
- ┆ Beignet
- ┆ Bisque
- ┆ Bourguignonne
- ┆ Crouton
- ┆ Goulash
- ┆ Quiche
- ┆ Souffle
- ┆ Stroganoff

Any food dish that begins with roux, is covered with gravy, has a thickened sauce or has a bread crumb topping probably has gluten.

You are probably beginning to realize at this point that gluten is present in many of the foods normally eaten. Because gluten is used as a thickener, it can be found in canned soups, catsup, mustard, salad dressings and dips.

In summary, the key to spotting gluten in foods and other products is:

1. Know the labeling terminology
2. Knowing what gluten is used for in processed foods

DEALING WITH GLUTEN REACTIONS

Not to sound discouraging, there will be times you accidentally eat gluten as mentioned earlier. Someone will misinform you about food ingredients or you don't read a label close enough. You may not recognize an ingredient word as meaning gluten, or you just cave in to temptation and take some bites of food you should not eat.

How you handle a gluten reaction is largely a measure of your fears concerning the intolerance of the disease. Unfortunately, a gluten reaction can be very unpleasant resulting in bloating or diarrhea. If you're at a meeting or a restaurant, you're faced with needing to hide the reactions from the public while dealing with the consequences of eating gluten.

If the reaction is mild, a few trips to the restroom might get you through the crisis. A good way to deal with a reaction is to take a lot of fiber and drink a lot of water. The fiber will serve a laxative that will force your bowels to eliminate the offending food as quickly as possible. Eating fiber and drinking water works very well.

Other ways for dealing with gluten reactions include eating lots of bananas or taking Pepto-Bismol. But really, most of the time you just have to wait out the reaction. Think about all the years you endured your condition with no help. Just because you now have a diagnosis and a doctor doesn't mean you should run to the doctor's office when you make a dietary mistake.

You have to use common sense in dealing with gluten reactions. If the reaction is mild or begins to improve within a couple of days, there's no reason to overreact. Demanding to see your doctor when there's really nothing he or she can do to help can be frustrating for you and ultimately unnecessary. Eventually, the gluten will work its way out of your system.

The worst "reaction to the reaction" is panic. Once you learn the damage gluten is doing to your system, it's natural to feel anxiety when you realize you've eaten gluten once again. But panic solves nothing.

When you are under a doctor's care, he or she will do regular blood testing to make sure you are not getting a regular dose of gluten.

STAY IN THE KNOW WITH CURRENT MEDICAL NEWS

Gluten intolerance and sensitivity, and Celiac Disease, are being researched continually. There's so much yet to be learned about what causes the disease and why some people are gluten intolerant and others are not. The data is still incomplete.

When you are diagnosed with gluten intolerance, it's important to stay informed about current medical news. You can talk to your doctor during each visit, but time is limited during appointments. Your doctor will often be the person you turn to with questions you develop as a result of your own study, research or general reading.

Staying in the know with current medical news will often mean gathering information from a variety of sources. Besides your doctor, these can include magazine articles, books, the internet, forums and support groups. Local and internet support groups are the best way to get regular information concerning new research and ideas for living a gluten free life.

Gluten free living support groups are not just cooking clubs. They perform important roles in the world of gluten intolerance and celiac disease. Celiac organizations serve as lobby groups and disseminators of medical information. You can go online and read medical research reports and findings. The support groups often report the information in a way that's understandable. The groups act as intermediaries between research groups and doctors also.

Gluten free living support groups were largely responsible for the USA enacting the first gluten labeling laws in 2004, which took effect January 2006. The support groups also disseminate information to members that make their lives easier all around. Members write books, write articles for the internet, share ideas and publish newsletters. They in effect keep the world on their toes when it comes to pursuing a better life for those with gluten intolerance.

You can join an online or local support group. A local support group gives you an opportunity to talk to other people face-to-face about problems and ideas related to gluten free living. Discussions can be simply about interesting gluten free meals, or detailed explanations of the newest medical research findings. It's always good to share quality time with people who have similar issues.

But not everyone has a local support group, or has the time to attend meetings. Instead, you can join an online group and gain access to reports, newsletters and be able to ask questions and solicit ideas. There are several major support groups recognized as stellar organizations that have played a major role in the

world of gluten free living and Celiac disease. The internet is an amazing invention that enables people with common problems to communicate and realize they are not alone.

When you read something new on the internet related to medical research, be sure to notify your doctor. A good doctor will be grateful for any leads that can assist with providing you better health care. If your doctor appears to be resentful or refuses to consider the information, consider finding another doctor. The medical world of celiac disease will change rapidly and frequently over the coming years and you want a doctor that's willing to investigate new therapies or treatments.

Following is a list of the major organizations that also have websites.

- Celiac Disease Foundation at <http://www.celiac.org>
- CSA (Celiac Sprue Association) at <http://www.csaceliacs.org>
- Gluten Intolerance Group at <http://www.gluten.net>
- Raising Our Celiac Kids (R.O.C.K.)
- Canadian Celiac Association at <http://www.celiac.ca>
- American Celiac Society at <http://www.americanceliacsociety.org/>

These are the large national organizations that have local chapters. And of course, my Gluten Free Club at <http://www.glutenfreeclub.com> has a wealth of information that I have compiled along with our many members.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK QUESTIONS

As mentioned several times, there is so much yet to be learned about gluten intolerance and celiac disease. Even what is known to date cannot be applied across the board to every person who has gluten intolerance. That means you will have lots of questions and they will be specific to your situation.

There are several ways to ask questions. You can ask your doctor during visits or by calling the office to speak with the him or her. You can join a support group and ask questions of the members. You can also join an online forum and seek the advice of others learning to live with gluten intolerance.

When you seek the advice of other people through forums, you must be careful to not believe everything you are told. Make sure you verify unprofessional advice

with your doctor or through one of the major foundations. Everyone has different reactions and symptoms to gluten exposure.

The most important point is you should never be afraid to ask questions of your doctor or your support group. Don't be a silent sufferer or live in fear of the symptoms you are experiencing. There are plenty of people who are experiencing the same things you are and understanding what's going on in your body is important.

That leads to another point. Don't be afraid to question your doctor about any terms used you don't recognize. This applies to words used on the internet, in forums or in written articles concerning gluten intolerance. Your questions can range from diet to treatments to related diseases to medications. There should be no topic off limits.

WHAT TO TALK ABOUT AT DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENTS

When you visit your doctor it's important to spend the time talking about important issues that will help you lead a quality life. Many people with gluten intolerance have already suffered for years with their symptoms and no diagnosis. Their patience becomes very thin after a while.

When you meet with a new doctor, you have to remember that this doctor is not the doctor who ignored your symptoms. This is not the doctor who didn't believe you when you explained how sick you are even though there's no outward sign. This is, hopefully, the doctor who'll listen to your story and take on the challenge of giving you a real diagnosis followed by solid advice on what to do next.

At your doctor's appointment you may want to talk about the following:

- Your history of symptoms
- Diagnostic tests that need to be completed
- How long results will take
- Your food journal entries
- Questions written in your food journal
- Possibility of symptoms indicating other related diseases or conditions
- Current medications

- ┆ The plan of attack for getting a diagnosis
- ┆ Nutritional plan
- ┆ The plan of attack for controlling the intolerance
- ┆ General questions
- ┆ Clarification of information you have learned on your own

Chances are you have been doing some reading about gluten intolerance before you go to the doctor. The national celiac and gluten foundations and non-profit organizations provide the most reliable information as discussed. But if you have gleaned information from the internet or through forums that you're not sure is reliable, you shouldn't hesitate to ask your doctor.

YOUR EMOTIONAL BATTLE WITH BEING GLUTEN FREE

COPING VERSUS MOPING

Being gluten intolerant isn't always easy and don't let anyone tell you differently. You must always be emotionally and mentally prepared to ward off temptations that you really would like to enjoy. You have to not only refuse foods you want to eat. You also have to give up foods you enjoy, be cautious about eating out, cook separate foods in your own home and wonder every day if you are going to eat something that will make you sick.

It's hard to watch other people eat your favorite foods. It's tough to know you can't just go out to eat and enjoy a meal without worry. It's hard to live with the idea that your own body has turned against you and made some foods the villains in your life.

It's also hard to have to explain over and over again what gluten is and why you can't eat it. It makes you feel like an outcast at times. But the worst part is the physical symptoms you feel when you slip up and eat gluten. It's scary to think

your intestines may be injured and that you have higher risks of developing certain diseases.

Yes, sometimes it's hard to cope. But the good news is that anyone can learn to live gluten free, and do so without feeling deprived. You don't have to give up your life or your favorite foods. You may have to cook your favorite foods a bit differently, but so what? I realized early it's such a minor adjustment to make in the big scheme of things, and it sure feels good to be healthy again!

When you are first diagnosed with gluten intolerance or even Celiac disease, the treatment is often as simple as, "don't eat gluten". The list of foods you aren't allowed to eat is long. Probably everything you love to eat is on it. For a short while, you may see a life ahead filled with boring plain food more suitable for nursing home life than for you. Gluten intolerance is a life changing diagnosis, but no one said it had to be a bad change. Your ability to thrive may well rely to a large extent on your attitude.

Attitude is the key to a successful transition. You can see yourself as sick or you can see yourself as gluten intolerant and unable to eat some foods. You can see yourself as abnormal or you can view yourself as someone with special nutritional needs. You can let your diet run you or you can run your diet.

The truth is you could have a debilitating disease that can't be controlled. Instead you have a disease or an intolerance that can be controlled by what you eat. Very few people have no health problems. From that viewpoint, you're no different from anyone else at all.

TAKING CONTROL

People who are diagnosed as gluten intolerant have a common reaction that can be difficult to overcome. That reaction is the feeling they have lost control of their life. You may be one of those people. If so, your reaction is normal.

Food is suppose to be life sustaining. It's supposed to nourish and keep a body healthy. When you have gluten intolerance, food becomes a threat. What was once looked upon with anticipation as one of life's pleasures becomes something that can be harmful. That's a big switch.

This can create a sense that you're no longer in control of your own life. You might feel you can no longer choose your food. Instead the food chooses you. Your diet becomes a monster that controls your life. You and your body become strangers.

The key to re-establishing control of your life is to realize that you most certainly can still choose what you eat. You can also do many things that will prove you are in control.

- You can prepare delicious gluten free snacks and foods for every occasion including at work or for mid-morning or afternoon snacks
- You can keep special desserts in the freezer made just for you that are gluten free so you can treat yourself when you want
- You can feed your family the same food you eat (as the cook, it's your prerogative)
- You can join a support group that constantly provides new recipe ideas and information you can use to maintain control of your diet
- You can keep gluten free ingredients on hand so when you're ready to cook your meals it's not an ordeal
- You can be honest with those around you who are insensitive about your feelings or needs
- You shouldn't underestimate your life changing diagnosis, but you should keep it in perspective
- You should give yourself time to adjust to your new nutritional requirements

It takes self-esteem and time to learn how to take control of your situation. If it were just you involved, the process would be simpler. Instead you have to deal with your gluten intolerance and the people around you who don't understand what you're feeling.

At first, the people around you may not take your medical condition seriously. When this happens they don't treat your needs with the respect they deserve. But just like you have to learn to live with your new nutritional guidelines, they must learn to accommodate your requirements. This includes spouse, children, extended family and friends.

You can establish a sense of control again in your life by being assertive and treating yourself with the respect you deserve. That means doing the things you need to do to insure you can cope with your dietary restrictions. Pamper yourself is my recommendation – especially when you first get the diagnosis.

WHAT YOU MIGHT FEEL IN THE BEGINNING, AND HOW TO DEAL WITH IT

There are so many emotions people feel when they are diagnosed with gluten intolerance or celiac disease. The first was just discussed – loss of control. But that can be just the beginning. Some psychologists compare the reaction people have to being told they have an autoimmune disease as similar to going into mourning.

The grieving occurs over the sense of loss of control and the realization that you must give up things you like. You cannot eat just anything anymore. But what makes it worse is the wrong food choices can actually make you sick again. These thoughts can lead to a level of paranoia. You become afraid of all foods because the list is so long of unsafe foods.

In addition, people newly diagnosed with gluten intolerance wonder how they can ever learn enough to keep themselves free from harm or sickness. There's so much to learn: terminology, label reading, medical reports, food lists and so on.

Other feelings that occur in the beginning include the following.

- Depression because a final diagnosis resulted in life changing consequences
- Fear that too much damage has been done to the body already from years of eating gluten
- Anger because you have an incurable medical condition
- Denial that this can't be happening to you
- Worry about what other people will think
- Trepidation that this diagnosis only means more medical problems are in the making

The best emotion is acceptance. Once you accept this is a problem that's not going away, it suddenly gets easier to deal with on a long term basis. It seems like attitude is being touted as the saving grace, but it's impossible not to talk about attitude. Your ability to develop a good attitude about the quality of your life despite being gluten intolerant will make the difference as to whether you live a full life or a limited fearful life.

FINDING SUPPORT FOR YOUR QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

The best way to insure you start your new gluten free life the right way is to have a support system in place as soon as possible. Some of the ways this can be accomplished have been discussed.

- Local support groups
- Doctors and nutritionists
- Celiac and gluten free forums
- Magazines, newsletters, books
- National and international foundations and nonprofit organizations
- Family and friends

Different age groups have different questions and concerns too. Because gluten intolerance is just now being accepted as common, elderly people are being diagnosed for the first time. They have lived their whole lives dealing with the symptoms of gluten intolerance and now finally know why they've had the problems

But some senior citizens have issues that younger celiacs don't have. Many times I receive questions from the children of elderly parents who are looking for ideas to help people who are as old as 80+ years cope with changing their diets. Some are on restricted diets already, limited incomes, have no transportation and don't cook well anymore. Being diagnosed as gluten intolerant at such an elderly age creates a whole new set of issues that require careful planning to address.

Children are another group of people with special requirements. Thousands of parents of celiac children, or children with gluten intolerance, have many questions. They have concerns about school food safety, lunchtime, special snacks, and emotional and psychological issues. If adults have problems accepting being different, it's not hard to imagine how tough it can be on children at school.

A third category of questions and concerns are related to teenagers. Teenagers, especially girls, are worried about things like putting on weight or not being able to eat on a date. Forums and support groups are lifesavers, because the teens can quickly learn they are not alone by any means. There are lots of teens wrestling with identical issues.

Finding support no matter what age you are is important. Young children will turn to their parents and teachers for emotional validation. Everyone else can find great support by utilizing the information that's readily available online or at the doctor's office.

It's frustrating to have questions and not know where to find answers. Even if you have a great doctor, it's unlikely you'll want to call the office with every single question you have about gluten intolerance. Doctors are also not always good at answering the nitty-gritty got-to-make-this-fit-my-life questions. Should little Mary use that brand of glue at school? What should Grandma eat everyday if she can't cook? What do I tell people who think my daughter is anorexic when she's really just healing from damage due to gluten?

The questions are unlimited and so are the answers sometimes. But that just means you can choose the option that works for you or your loved one. What's important to know is the fact that everyone copes in a different way. You may cry for a week and then get on with the business of firmly dealing with the situation. You may need lots of reassurance and assistance which you can find through all the resources discussed. You may be the kind of person who is quietly accepting.

All people should be patient with themselves. If you slip up every now and then and binge eat, it's important to forgive yourself and learn a lesson from it for the future.

WHY DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND?

Part of the coping process, especially during transitioning, is learning to deal with others reactions. The need to not overact and how to handle difficult questions has been discussed.

One of the most immediate effects your new gluten free life has on other people is their lives change because your life must change. Old traditions and familiar routines have to be changed. For example, you might not be able to go to the same restaurant for your anniversary anymore, because there's nothing you can eat. The subtle and not so subtle changes you must make in your life may cause resentment in others.

Not everyone is going to understand your need to avoid gluten. That's a fact you should understand from the beginning. Not everyone is going to have sympathy for your situation. This is particularly true for people who have eaten the same way all their life and now must tell others they have been eating all the wrong foods.

Gluten intolerance reactions or symptoms don't always create visible outward signs. That means others must accept your condition on faith and your word it's

true. You must be prepared for disbelief at first. You must also be prepared to deal with family and friends who get tired of you giving waiters the third degree at every meal and or resent you asking for a personal visit by the chef to your table.

The best way to deal with others that don't understand is to be as well informed as possible about your condition, and make sure the people who form your support group are informed also. You should collect all the information you can and share it with family and friends. You should encourage them to ask questions and make sure you answer them fully and completely.

You should also explain to anyone you socialize with on a regular basis what you need to do at restaurants or parties to protect yourself. If they know in advance what to expect, you'll be amazed at how soon they rally around you in a protective manner. You need to tell the people closest to you what you are feeling and explain it's difficult for you also.

EXPLAINING YOURSELF...OR NOT

The one thing you do not want to do is let people believe your gluten intolerance is an allergy or psychosomatic. As a person who is fortunate to finally find out what has been making you sick, you are a banner carrier of sorts. You have an opportunity to not only explain yourself to others, but to share important information that others may be able to use.

There are more people who have not been diagnosed with their gluten intolerance than have been diagnosed. That means millions of people are still trying to find out why they never feel good and have trouble eating. Do you remember the days of despair when you wondered if you would ever be able to live a healthy life? Well, there are plenty of people at that stage and they have doctors who still believe celiac disease is rare.

Explaining yourself, or not explaining yourself, depends on the situation. If someone is being rude and asking personal questions that are not relevant to the situation, you don't have to answer. If you suspect someone is asking you questions simply because they enjoy putting someone on the spot, you don't have to explain. If you are at a special event, such as a funeral wake or business luncheon, you don't have to explain because it's probably not the right time to be discussing such personal issues.

As you adapt to your new gluten free lifestyle, you'll learn when it's time to explain yourself and share important information about your condition. The point is you don't always have to answer questions though. Sometimes, it's best to keep your personal information just that – personal.

You certainly don't want to give too much detail about your symptoms to the wrong people – dinner guests, at a party or at work – unless it's mutually agreeable conversation. If you want to make yourself stand out from the crowd – just tell them you ate something at work that gave you severe diarrhea all night! You should get the point by now.

Of course, there are cruel people in the world who just cannot accept the fact that others have problems besides themselves.

POSSIBLE SABOTAGE SITUATIONS AND HOW TO HANDLE THEM

You will come across situations where someone wants you to fail at living a gluten free life. They'll put you to the test over and over again by trying to force you to eat gluten one way or the other to make a point. You'll discover people who have trouble believing you have a medical condition when there's no outward sign. Unfortunately, some people are just kind of mean too. Let's face it – not everyone is going to be supportive of your new lifestyle.

Sabotage is a rough word, but it fits in some situations. When someone offers you gluten filled food over and over again after you've explained the situation a dozen times, they probably are hoping you will not succeed. (these are the same people who tempt people dieting with cakes and cookies). When your spouse asks you to bake his or her favorite wheat bread, they obviously don't understand the severity of the problem yet or are refusing to accept the fact things are changing.

When it's your family instigating the sabotage, it's most likely a good idea to sit down with them and explain that their actions are potentially harmful. You should be patient and describe how trying to place you in situations where you could eat gluten is the same as trying to injure you. Sometimes it takes strong words.

If it's so-called friends or acquaintances that refuse to be part of your support system, it's time to admit they are not really your friends. If someone purposely tries to sabotage your gluten free lifestyle over and over again, you can assume the blame for not informing them properly and then stay away from that point forward if possible.

As you can see, you might have to form new friendships. That's how much of an impact being diagnosed as gluten intolerant can have on your life.

CHANGING YOUR KITCHEN AND PANTRY

CLEANING OUT THE GLUTEN IN YOUR HOME

Though you have already learned about how to read labels, you have to do much more than just look at each bottle and can in your kitchen or medicine cabinet. You need to really *clean* out the gluten in your home. That means eliminating all traces of gluten as much as possible.

We always promise ourselves that a good spring cleaning is going to happen every year, and most of us get too busy. You now need to do that spring cleaning except it's gluten dust you're seeking. You're going to separate, clean, toss and rearrange your kitchen to make your cooking and eating life as easy and safe as possible.

- You can start with the pantry and identify anything with gluten in it and set it aside
- You should clean out the refrigerator and toss all leftovers and opened containers
- You should empty the cupboards and rewash all dishes, pots and pans
- You should wipe down all cupboards inside and out
- You should wipe down all countertops, sinks and tables and chairs
- You should identify the gluten free refrigerator shelf, drawer, countertop and cupboard that are off limits to anyone else
- You should purchase or set aside gluten free cooking appliances, utensils and baking items such as cookie sheets

Now you are ready to move on to the bathrooms and bedrooms, following the same process. Identify anything that contains gluten including makeup with wheat germ or toothpaste or lotions. You should completely clean out drawers and shelves and wipe them down to eliminate any potential gluten dust from powders.

Gluten dust is potent to a gluten intolerant person. You can breathe in the dust and have a gluten reaction. That's why you want to start your new life by completely cleaning and wiping down anything that might have come in contact

with gluten in any way, shape or form. There's no such thing as cleaning too much so you don't have to worry you're wasting your time. You not only get a gluten free house, you get that spring cleaning job actually completed.

There's nothing like a clean and spotless house to serve as a symbol of a new healthy lifestyle.

WHAT SHOULD BE TOSSED

When you go through your gluten spring cleaning, you end up with containers and cans that are gluten containing food in one pile. The other pile is food that's gluten free. Now you must decide what to toss out and what to keep.

The following are recommendations only. Practically speaking, you may not be able to afford tossing some food products away. If you keep some of the containers or boxes of opened foods with gluten, store the ones that can potentially cross contaminate other foods with crumbs or dust into air-tight containers and clearly mark as unsafe to eat.

- You should toss anything that has been opened that contains gluten. Read all labels as discussed earlier and determine which foods are unsafe.
- You should toss any containers that are scratched and have been used to store gluten containing foods (old plastic containers for example)
- You should toss any food you discover has an expiration date
- You should toss any oil sitting in appliances that's been used to fry foods
- You should toss any food without labels
- You should toss food you have stored in containers and not in original packaging
- You should toss all hygiene products containing gluten such as wheat germ

In the beginning, converting to a gluten free life can involve some expense. You can be practical and keep food you can't eat to be used by the rest of the family. If you do, you should make sure they are stored separately from the food you will be eating. Also, don't forget to wipe down all of the containers themselves to remove any gluten dust that settled on the food packages over time.

FILLING THE PANTRY

Once you have cleaned gluten out of your home, or clearly identified those items containing gluten, it's time to restock the pantry. Your goal is to have a supply of foods on hand for cooking and snacking. You want to make sure you have a large enough variety of foods to help you avoid binge eating.

Binge eating is one of the biggest reasons for failure to adhere to a gluten free diet. You get hungry in the evening and the rest of the family is enjoying some crackers and cheese that you can't eat. You go to the kitchen to get your own gluten free snack. If none exist in your pantry, what are the odds you will not at least take a taste of a forbidden food?

I recommend the following *gluten free* snack items should be kept on hand at all times as a minimum.

- ┆ Crackers
- ┆ Soups
- ┆ Cookies
- ┆ Pretzels
- ┆ Sauce mixes
- ┆ Peanut butter
- ┆ Dips
- ┆ Boxed meals
- ┆ Rice
- ┆ Non wheat cereals
- ┆ Pasta
- ┆ Unflavored ground coffee
- ┆ Chips
- ┆ Plain nuts

Then you should also resupply your cupboard with *gluten free* baking items.

- ┆ Gluten free flour
- ┆ Baking powder
- ┆ Cake mixes
- ┆ Xanthan gum
- ┆ Vanilla extract
- ┆ Yeast

Well, you should get the idea by now. What you are doing is replacing your gluten filled foods with gluten free foods. Your goal is to resupply your pantry well enough so you 1) have the items on hand when you're ready to cook, and 2) aren't tempted to eat unsafe foods.

Even after you clean out and resupply your cupboards, you still need to get in the habit of reading labels until you are almost 100% confident a particular brand is gluten free. Even then, be careful to watch for words on labels that say "new and improved" on foods you consider safe. Make sure the improvement is not the addition of gluten.

INGREDIENTS THAT ARE GLUTEN OR GLUTEN RELATED

Some words are just wheat by another name. Some of the words were discussed earlier. But you need to watch for more than words that indicate wheat derivatives like dextrin or maltodextrin. Look for words that are groups of food elements of which one might contain the gluten protein.

- ┆ Flavors
- ┆ Soy Sauce
- ┆ Spices
- ┆ Seasonings
- ┆ Sweeteners
- ┆ Yeast

Whenever you see the word "distilled" the product can be considered safe despite the ongoing belief it's not. The gluten protein molecule is too large to survive the distilling process. That means you can use distilled vinegar for example.

It's easy to see that you must learn a lot about how gluten is used in foods in order to recognize ingredients that can be considered safe and unsafe. It may be necessary to eat very plain food just during the transition stage while you're early in the learning curve.

CHANGING THE WAY YOU EAT

MAKING SIMPLE ADJUSTMENTS IN YOUR FAVORITE RECIPES

You know you're gluten intolerant. You've cleaned your kitchen and eliminated or identified food items containing gluten. You know the general ingredients and gluten free foods you need to resupply your kitchen pantry. Now what about your favorite recipes? Does this mean you can't eat your favorite dishes any more?

When shopping, most people buy ingredients at the grocery store that are needed to make favorite recipes. Some recipes are handed down through family generations while others have simply proven themselves to be reliable or easy to make. Whatever the reason, favorite recipes are like old comfortable slippers you don't want to let go of unless absolutely necessary.

The good news is you don't have to give up your favorite recipes just because you are gluten intolerant. You can make simple adjustments to the recipes using gluten free ingredients and often not even be able to taste any difference.

You are fortunate to live in a world that is quickly adapting to the needs of people who are gluten intolerant. You can buy most ingredients in a gluten free version today. That means you can buy gluten free flour such as rice or tapioca flour instead of wheat flour. You can buy gluten free baking powder and chocolate with no additives.

There are other simple substitutions you can make also. If you like salmon croquets, use gluten free bread crumbs in the mixture. When you bake your favorite dessert, just substitute gluten free vanilla, flour and baking powder. If a recipe calls for fruit, buy fresh fruit and make your own thickening glaze.

When you first begin to substitute ingredients in your favorite recipes, you might have to play around a bit with adjusting the liquid measurements. Some gluten free flours tend to be drier than wheat flour for example. But it won't take long

before you will have converted all your favorite recipes to a gluten free version by using items such as xanthan gum to correct problems like breads coming out too dry.

If you can't imagine life without pizza and lasagna, then don't! You can use gluten free pizza dough, gluten free tomato sauce and gluten free pasta and have all the pizza and lasagna in your life you expect. I have had great success cooking gluten free by learning how to substitute ingredients. I wasn't about to give up my favorite lasagna recipe just because I'm gluten intolerant.

GLUTEN FREE SUBSTITUTIONS

Making gluten free substitutions is simple. Most of the time it's a simple exchange of ingredients using the identical measurements called for in the recipe.

- Use gluten free flour in the same amounts as wheat flour
- When recipes call for coating the pan, use non-gluten flour
- Try different kinds of gluten free flours to determine the one that tastes best to you
- Use gluten free products to create gluten free ingredients, i.e. salad croutons made from a loaf of gluten free bread
- Use gluten free cheeses wherever cheese is an ingredient
- Use rice milk instead of dairy milk if you're lactose intolerant

The ways to substitute are unlimited. You can shop for gluten free ingredients and products at your local supermarket or health food store or online. There are dozens of reliable internet based gluten free stores selling high quality products you can trust.

When you begin to experiment with substitutions, have fun. Remember when attitude was discussed as a determining factor in your successful transitioning to a gluten free life? The same attitude applies to cooking. If you approach your ingredient substitution as a challenge and a chance to continue enjoying the foods you like, the experience will be enjoyable. If you approach the project as a chore then that's exactly what it will be – a tedious chore you don't enjoy.

Prepare yourself for failure. The first time you substitute or modify a recipe you may not be successful – especially if you don't have much cooking experience. But if you approach it as a test, as a learning experience, it won't take long before you have more successes than failures.

GLUTEN FREE MEAL PREPARATIONS

There are two primary approaches to gluten free meal preparation. The first is using gluten free ingredient substitutions in recipes as discussed. The second approach is to cook using fresh ingredients as much as possible.

When are gluten intolerant, you need to consider your diet in terms far beyond gluten exposure. Many foods today are prepared loaded with fats, additives, and toxins. In addition, gluten intolerance is a malabsorption problem. That means you may very well not be getting enough essential nutrients, vitamins and minerals. Nutritional deficiencies aggravate gluten reactions and cause additional health problems.

When you are gluten intolerant, it becomes crucial you eat a balanced low-fat diet that provides essential nutrients. I would suggest you first get nutritional counseling followed by eating healthy unprocessed foods. Your gluten free meal preparations should include lots of fresh fruits and vegetables, meats and poultry without sauces and gravies and low sugar desserts.

Since you can no longer just open cans and mix and stir, you'll have to allow for more time to prepare meals. This is true especially during your transition stage to a gluten free diet. It always takes longer to prepare and cook fresh foods - this explains why fast food restaurants are so popular in busy lifestyles.

The time you spend is worth the effort though. When you first begin the process of eliminating gluten from your life, your body needs time to heal. For some people this can take as long as several years if the intestinal injury is severe or the immune system compromised. You can speed up your recovery by eating gluten free meals that are nutritionally balanced.

If having enough time to cook gluten free meals every day is a problem, a good suggestion is to cook food ahead that can be frozen for meals during the week. Your support group will have many great recipes to share with you and lots of ideas for simplifying your cooking needs.

Life is always good – even when you're gluten sensitive!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT BEING GLUTEN FREE

Can I outgrow celiac disease or gluten intolerance?

Gluten intolerance and celiac disease cannot be outgrown. You must adhere to a gluten free nutritional plan the rest of your life.

Can even a trace of gluten cause a reaction?

Yes it can. As little as 30 milligrams of gluten can cause intestinal damage.

Should I tell my doctor about every little digestion problem I experience?

Though you should not panic when you have a gluten reaction, you should record all digestive problems in a food journal. When you see the doctor, report the entries in your log. The more you tell your doctor the better.

Do I have to have a biopsy?

If blood work indicates the need or symptoms have been ongoing for a long period of time, the only way to definitively determine if you have celiac disease or gluten intolerance is through a biopsy.

Does a biopsy hurt?

The biopsy is done without any anesthesia in some countries it's so painless. In the USA, you are lightly anesthetized so you're not uncomfortable during the procedure.

Can I drink milk?

Gluten has damaged the intestine making it difficult to digest dairy products. You may be temporarily or permanently lactose intolerant due to the damage. You should not use dairy products until the intestines are completely healed and then discuss adding dairy back into your diet at that point.

Am I going to get cancer because of gluten inflicted damage to my intestines?

The answer is: not necessarily. The chances of developing cancer are higher for people with celiac disease, but a lot depends on how long you have been eating gluten and how much intestinal damage has been done as a result.

What do I do if I realize I was exposed to gluten through cross contamination?

You should learn by your mistakes and try not to repeat the same mistake. You need to realize that every now and then accidents will happen, and you will be exposed to gluten.

I read that people with gluten intolerance are more likely to develop osteoporosis. Should I have my bone density tested now?

If you are gluten intolerant and seeing a doctor, you probably will be tested for bone density problems. Studies are showing osteoporosis is a result of many factors and one of them is not enough calcium and vitamin D. When you have malabsorption problems, these essential vitamins and minerals may not be making it into your bloodstream. The result over a long period of time is often osteoporosis.

Should I join a support group?

You should absolutely join a local or online support group. There's no reason to take this journey alone, and it's critical you stay current on the latest medical news concerning gluten intolerance issues. For those who are time pressured or don't enjoy joining groups remember my Gluten Free Club online at <http://www.glutenfreeclub.com>

Can I drink alcohol?

You can drink alcohol that's not made with grains containing gluten. Most beer is off limits except for the new gluten-free beers entering the market. You can drink alcohol that has been distilled such as gin or whiskey.

But there is a caveat. You need to be careful that you do not drink enough to lose control or the inability to make good decisions. Alcohol is notorious for weakening resolve making it harder for you to turn down gluten laden foods when offered.

Are you sure gluten can't be absorbed through the skin via lotions and creams?

Yes, because the gluten molecule is too large to penetrate the skin.

What other disease am I prone to develop because I have celiac disease or am gluten intolerant?

The recognized associated diseases are lactose intolerance, osteoporosis, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, intestinal cancer, infertility and anemia. In addition, you are more likely to develop another autoimmune disorder such as Sjögren's Syndrome, thyroid disease or chronic liver disease.

The message here is to religiously follow your gluten free diet.

I think I have gluten intolerance, but my doctor refuses to test me. What do I do?

You need to find another doctor. A doctor who refuses to follow through with diagnostic tests on a chronically ill patient is not a good doctor. In the meantime, your intestines are potentially being injured.

Is gluten intolerance or celiac disease hereditary?

Yes, it is which means you need to watch for signs of intolerance in your children or have blood work done for monitoring purposes.

What is gluten exactly?

Gluten is the protein in wheat.

What is wheat starch?

Wheat is made of protein and starch. When you wash away the starch, you're left with gluten.

Can I eat oats?

Oats were on the list of foods forbidden to gluten intolerant people. Research has shown they are safe to eat **as long as they have not been cross contaminated with wheat grains.**

Unless the package says gluten free, it's not advisable to eat oats because they are often grown side-by-side with wheat and barley.

I am following a gluten free diet and still getting sick. Why?

There can be many reasons why you are still getting sick despite following a gluten free diet. First, you may still be eating gluten disguised under another name. Second, you may have another disorder that's not being treated by following a gluten free diet.

There is always the off chance you don't have gluten intolerance also, but if you have had blood work and/or a biopsy, there should not be a misdiagnosis.

I am upset with my best friend because she doesn't believe I am sick. What can I do to convince her?

You should give her all the information you can about gluten intolerance. She probably doesn't understand you can be sick and not look sick.

Is caramel color safe?

It's safe if made with corn which is the normal production standard in the United States.

Is vinegar safe?

Distilled vinegar is safe.

When making my kitchen gluten free, do I have to throw out my seasonings?

Unfortunately, seasonings are not specifically defined by the FDA. There may be gluten present in powder or dust form or through field cross contamination. It's recommended you buy seasonings from a gluten free store.

Can I eat chocolate?

You can eat chocolate that has no additives. You should also be aware that milk chocolate has dairy in it and should not be eaten by those who have a lactose intolerance.

After eliminating gluten from my diet, when will I start to feel better?

You may feel better within 2 weeks though your intestines will not be healed yet.

It's taking forever to do my grocery shopping which makes me hurry and get careless about what I choose. What can I do to speed up shopping?

You should try to do your product research before you go to the grocery store. Research product names and manufacturers. Most manufacturers list their product ingredients online.

Make a list of safe products in alphabetical order to make them easy to find on the list while shopping.

My co-workers think I'm faking my gluten intolerance so I can call in sick. I have had to miss some days recently because of diagnostic testing ordered. What should I tell them?

It's a personal decision as to how much of your personal medical problems you reveal to co-workers. But you should consider sharing information with them including the need for a biopsy and what happens if you eat gluten. Once they learn more about the condition, chances are they will be more understanding.

Most people are very nice and want to help. Sometimes people act the way they do simply because they don't know better. You can be their instructor.

This whole gluten intolerance problem is depressing to me. I feel like my diet runs my life now. How can I change this feeling?

First talk to your doctor and then your family. You need to share your concerns and find ways to take back control of your life.

Whatever you do, don't try to deal with your gluten intolerance alone. Depression is an illness in itself and must be addressed in order to improve.

Can you have celiac disease and no symptoms?

Yes, it's possible. When your symptoms are silent, it sometimes takes longer to uncover the fact you are gluten intolerant.

CONCLUSION

At one time, gluten intolerance was seen as very rare and a childhood disease. Medical research has come a long way in just the last ten years. Gluten intolerance is a condition that affects millions of people who still don't know they have the problem! Things are slowly changing though as doctors and patients become more aware of the existence of gluten intolerance, sensitivity and celiac disease.

You should never self-diagnose. If you have been experiencing digestion problems for years, you need to find a doctor that will test for gluten intolerance. There's no doubt you've suffered enough already. Being diagnosed with gluten intolerance can be scary, but it's scarier to not know what is going on with your body. Ignorance is not bliss.

Once you get your diagnosis that you're intolerant, it's time to begin making changes in your lifestyle. You must now eliminate all gluten from your life. That sounds easy until you realize it affects every aspect of your home, work and social life. You will have to deal with people who don't want to support your efforts, don't believe you and actually try to sabotage your gluten free diet.

Through it all you will learn to handle all the situations with grace and style. You see, a diagnosis finally puts you on the path to feeling good. You cannot be cured of gluten intolerance, but you can heal. There's a lot to be done during the transition to gluten free living. You must keep a food journal, clean gluten out of your kitchen, figure out what you're going to eat every day and not get bored, and learn how to keep your family fed without endangering yourself.

Fortunately, you don't have to do it alone. You can join a support group or forum and join ranks with people who are living full and healthy lives despite having gluten intolerance. You can also use these groups to make a difference to others. Gluten free living groups as a group have shown they have the power to influence the law, such as the recent labeling law changes prove.

You may be gluten intolerant, but you're still YOU! You're the same person after the diagnosis as you were before you knew what was making you sick.

You're the same person who has to eat differently in order to stay healthy!

FEEDBACK

I truly value your feedback. If there are any typos, errors, omissions and you'd like to let me know or if you have any thoughts or anything you'd like to add, please let me know. I will certainly take your comments into consideration when I re-publish this book.

I'd love to hear from you about how my book impacted you, what you learned, what you thought about it.

Go to <http://www.glutenfreeclub.com/bgcomments> to give me your feedback, that way all the comments will be in one place. Please do not email me your comments as then I will lose track of them when it comes time for the revision.

Thanks so much!

Angie.