



GLUTEN FREE DIAGNOSIS

And The Journey Forward

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Gluten Free Club

GLUTEN FREE DIAGNOSIS AND THE JOURNEY FORWARD

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1 INTRODUCTION

So many people live for years with celiac disease, and then one day, they finally get the diagnosis – gluten intolerance. A tiny little protein has been causing all the medical problems, and now it must be banished from your life. The initial reaction to a diagnosis is often one of elation at getting answers which is quickly followed by despair over the news you are now forever on a diet. But the diagnosis of gluten intolerance means you can now take control of your life and your health. There just can't be better news than that!

Of course, you first have to wade through the initial shock and anxiety to get to an understanding of the gluten free lifestyle. The doctor hands you a diagnosis, a list of foods you can't eat and says he'll see you in a month. Now what do you do? That is what this book is about – what to do next as you embark on a healthy lifestyle.

When you get a gluten free diagnosis, you have to immediately begin making changes in your life. The quicker you stop eating gluten, the sooner you will begin to heal. This book provides tips, ideas and plans for implementing a gluten free lifestyle in the first 30 days after diagnosis. You will learn how to research the internet, find support groups and deal with doctors. There's a lot of information in this book about how to address questions concerning the gluten free lifestyle in a methodical manner. One of the intents of this book is to help you not become overwhelmed by the vast amount of information available.

The quicker you stop eating gluten, the sooner you will begin to heal

This book also teaches you to become proactive in the sense a gluten free lifestyle is not about hiding in the safety of your home. You need to resume a normal life as gluten intolerant and that means attending parties, eating at restaurants and traveling. The idea of eating in the real world can be a bit frightening at first, but you can gain the confidence you need through research and the help of family, friends, and support groups. For those times you accidentally eat gluten, there's a section on getting back on track emotionally.

The gluten free lifestyle is being adopted by a lot of people who aren't even gluten intolerant. The reason is they see it as a healthy lifestyle. If you have the right attitude and spend the time doing preplanning for meals, social occasions and travel, the gluten free lifestyle will become a way of life you happily adopt. How can you not appreciate something that makes you feel so good?!

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REACTING TO THE NEWS

When people are told they have gluten intolerance or celiac disease (the terms will be used interchangeably throughout the book), the first reaction is shock. “I have a *disease?*” Then there’s a whole chain reaction of thoughts that fly through the mind.

Whoa...wait a minute! Other people get diseases, but not me!

This can’t be right....I thought I just had some digestive problems.

I wonder what the heck gluten is and why is it making me sick?

I have to give up *what???*

These are just a few of the thoughts that a person might have who’s just been told they can’t eat wheat anymore. You might have had many other thoughts, but I would imagine the ones just listed were among them. That’s because some reactions are normal.

The best news is you are not dying from this disease, and the damage caused to date can often be reversed by eliminating gluten from the diet.

The word *disease* can strike fear in people’s hearts. Actually, the word *intolerance* can cause the same emotional distress. It doesn’t take long to understand that life will have to change anytime you have a disease or intolerance. The good news is you are not alone. The better news is the disease can be controlled with some diet discipline. The best news is you are not dying from this disease, and the damage caused to date can often be reversed by eliminating gluten from the diet.

Still, many people get really scared when they are told they have celiac disease. Part of the reason is because many doctors are still not as familiar with gluten intolerance as they should be. When they pronounce the diagnosis, their lack of knowledge becomes apparent. Psychologically, that can create some concern on a subliminal level. But that still doesn’t change the fact that you are gluten intolerant and must deal with how it will affect your life.

There are so many emotional issues related to the news you have celiac disease. Anytime you have a health issue related to food, it can be very distressing. But darn it! Gluten is in everything – bread, cans of food, sauces, breadings, makeup, lotions and

even office supplies. Of course, you probably don't learn this until later – after you leave the doctor's office.

Coping with change is easy for some people, and extremely difficult for others. But there are common reactions to the news that people experience. We're all human and the human experience includes both physical and emotional issues. These issues can be difficult to deal with if you don't like change. The gluten free lifestyle requires change. That's just a fact for everyone with gluten intolerance. You can't keep eating the same way you've been eating, because that's what is making you sick.

So let's look at the various emotional reactions that can occur with the news you have a *disease!*

Feelings of Losing Control

One of the most basic reactions is the feeling you suddenly lost control of your life. Actually, this feeling can start even before you get the news you have celiac disease. When you're anxiously waiting for medical test results, the feelings can include anxiousness.

The interesting fact about gluten intolerance is that it takes between 8 to 11 years from first symptom reporting to actual diagnosis. During that time you know something is wrong with your digestive system, but really have no idea what it might be. At some point you finally get to the point where one medical test might finally tell you the answer to the problem. Then you wait some more to get the results of the test.

The words that are frequently used by people who are waiting to find out if they have celiac disease include:

- Anxious
- Depressed
- Discouraged

These feelings are actually layers of emotions that pile up over the years. When you are experiencing digestive problems the first reaction is that you ate something bad. As the problems continue, you start to worry that it's something serious. Then you visit doctors over and over again and nothing changes. This can lead to depression, and in fact often does. While you wait for the test results, the reality sets in that you

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might have something really serious and possibly incurable. After all, you've been sick a long time.

The point is the feelings you experience begin long before you are diagnosed. When you get the actual diagnosis, the newest feeling can be fear. Overlaying all this emotion is the feeling you have lost control of your life. Before you're diagnosed, you think you've lost control because you don't have any idea what is making you feel so bad. Then after you're diagnosed, you have to deal with the fact you have lost control of your body to disease. It can be very scary, but as you will soon learn, the fear is normal and natural and can be overcome.

As you will learn, the way to overcome the fear is to take control of your life which includes your diet. In fact, this is really no different than someone who must follow a low cholesterol diet or probably have a stroke. The cholesterol will line the arteries bit by bit until there is total blockage. Celiac disease is not curable, but it can be controlled by not eating gluten. So it comes down to learning how to take control of your life and everyone should do that when it comes to protecting good health.

Will I Have to Live on Rice and Potatoes?

When the doctor or nutritionist first hands you a list of foods you can't eat anymore, the initial reaction is often sheer panic. The list looks so darn long and seems to have been written to exclude everything you like to eat. You can't eat those Saturday morning donuts anymore. The boxes of breakfast cereal will have to go. The frozen vegetables in sauce will be given to your friends so they don't have to be thrown away. The cans of chili you open on Friday nights when you don't feel like cooking are no longer acceptable. Oh... no more croutons on salads....no more sandwiches made with wheat bread....no more wheat crackers and cheese....no more....no more....no...no...no...

In fact, you have been sentenced to a life of healthy eating, and that's great news.

Let's see...you can eat rice and baked potatoes! But if you eat these two items every meal, you're going to get really bored with your dietary plan and you're going to put on weight. So it's all gloom and doom – right? The answer is: Wrong! You're not doomed to a life of rice and potatoes. In fact, you have been sentenced to a life of

healthy eating, and that's great news. You can eat fresh fruits, fresh vegetables and low fat meats, chicken and fish. If you have a sweet tooth, you can eat sugar in gluten free desserts. And you will soon see there is a huge selection of gluten free products now available in almost every food category.

If you think that all you can eat is rice and baked potatoes, then you need to read on and learn about the first 30 day plan.

Coming To Grips with Your Permanent Condition

Another common reaction to hearing you have gluten intolerance is a feeling of hopelessness, because this is a permanent condition. You will now have to be gluten free for life. You may actually go through a grieving process due to a feeling of loss. “Permanent” is a really long time, and you’re life will never be the same again.

But here’s a thought for you to savor. What are you REALLY giving up? You’re giving up all those days you didn’t feel well. You’re giving up those listless hours where you had no energy. You’re giving up getting sick after parties where you enjoyed buffet food. You’re giving up being afraid of food and that’s because you’re going to learn to confront your fears and take control.

So the bad news is being gluten intolerant is a permanent condition. The good news is being gluten intolerant is a permanent condition. It’s a permanent condition that can be controlled by making good food choices. Just think of all the other kind of diseases you could have been diagnosed with that are permanent, and you’ll realize how lucky you are being a celiac.

The Struggle with Loneliness

If you have just been diagnosed with celiac disease, you may feel all alone. I think anyone who is told they have a disease or permanent condition will feel very alone at first. But since gluten intolerance involves food, it means there are certain family events that will take on whole new meaning. I know when I was diagnosed, one of my very first reactions was I can no longer share pizza with my kids and husband on Saturday night. After I studied the list of forbidden foods, I realized traditional holiday meals could be a real problem. I felt very alone. I felt like the world was revolving around me, and I was standing still holding a baked potato!

My message to you is that you are not alone in any sense of the word. There are millions of gluten intolerant people who are learning to mesh their gluten free life with family events. You can learn just as easily. Later you will learn different methods you can use to make your transition to a gluten free life.

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Why Do I Feel Angry?

Feeling anger is a common reaction to the gluten intolerance diagnosis.

Feeling anger is a common reaction to the gluten intolerance diagnosis. Anger often follows quickly after the shock and fear and feelings of loss of control. The problem with anger in this situation is that it really does not help. What are you going to be angry about? Are you mad at heredity? Are you mad at the gluten protein? Are you mad at your parents for producing a child who develops gluten intolerance? No matter who or what you're angry with the next problem is deciding what you're going to do about dealing with the anger. Unresolved anger will just get in the way of you moving on in a productive manner. You can deal with anger in several ways.

- Learn all you can about gluten intolerance
- Discuss your feelings with your family and close friends
- Get professional help if the anger persists

Anger is one of those emotions that often occur because someone doesn't have all the facts, or has only one side of the story. If you learn all you can about celiac disease, you'll soon realize that anger directed at family is unjustified. You'll forget your anger when you learn specific steps to take in order to live a gluten free life.

Emotional Roller Coaster

Probably, most people have a complete mixture of emotions that swirl around like a whirlpool. On some days, you might feel angry, and other days you feel sad. Other emotions that can occur with the initial diagnosis include the following.

- Bewilderment that this has happened to you
- Frustration you will have to change so many parts of your life
- Confusion about what to do next
- Grief over the loss of food traditions
- Denial

You have to be careful that confusion over what the diagnosis means to your life does not get converted into denial. Ignoring the problem will not make it go away in this case. You have an immune problem that is triggered by the protein and nothing will change that fact. So you must not be angry. You should be determined to take control of your emotions and your diet, and thus your life. Later in the book we will discuss how to overcome denial and move into proactive acceptance.

You may be going through a lot of emotions, but you're not alone. Your family is also going to go through some feelings about your diagnosis and the need to change your lifestyle. One of the more difficult moments in initial diagnosis stages is the need to deal with both your own reactions and the reactions of everyone else. Women are often caregivers and they often have the most difficult time. They feel initially like they have gone from caregiver to caretaker. The next section discusses family reactions – what they might be and how to deal with them.

One of the more difficult moments in initial diagnosis stages is the need to deal with both your own reactions and the reactions of everyone else.

FAMILY REACTIONS

Family reactions can be as varied as your own. What I discovered in my family was my immediate family was ready to jump in and help and my extended family needed some convincing. There's a good reason for this though. My kids and husband had seen me feeling poorly day after day and understood by the time I got the diagnosis it was serious. When you watch someone you love frequently get ill, it can be heartbreaking and make you feel powerless. When I got an actual diagnosis, my family finally felt they could help me by doing something tangible- rid gluten from the house.

There are just as many possible family reactions to the celiac disease or gluten intolerance diagnosis as there are for those who are finally diagnosed. That means you have to deal with your own emotions and feelings, and the reactions of your family. It can be a bit overwhelming at first, but you will quickly learn to manage the situation through positive reinforcements of your gluten free lifestyle.

Acceptance

It would be nice if every family member simply accepted the fact you must change your eating habits and your very lifestyle in order to manage the disease. When your family and friends accept you have a medical condition that requires changes in traditions, the foods you eat and even your ability to enjoy certain activities such as

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eating at restaurants, then you get the benefit of a supportive group from the beginning. It's been shown through research that people are much more likely to stick with a diet if those they spend the most time with are supportive.

If your family and friends are accepting of your need to change your lifestyle, then you will probably have a much easier time coming to grips with your own emotions. You will also find it easier to change your lifestyle. For example, your whole family might be more willing to live a gluten free lifestyle with you.

Minimization

A frequent response by family and friends to learning you have gluten intolerance is minimization. They act like it's "no big deal". Of course, when you call it celiac disease, it sounds a lot more serious than gluten intolerance. The word "disease" has much more psychological impact than the word "intolerance". People who minimize will make statements that prove they don't really understand the situation. Besides indicating it's no big deal, they will also call it an "allergy", a "diet" or tell you "at least you don't have cancer or something that will kill you." It sounds so harsh on paper, but people can be insensitive even while thinking they are making you feel better.

The minute your family or friends call your disease an "allergy", you know you have your work cut out to explain why it's not an allergy. But it's important they learn the truth about your gluten intolerance. The bottom line is that it's not an allergy, and left unchecked, could certainly bring on an early death in several ways: malnutrition, digestive system cancers, development of other autoimmune diseases and others.

My advice is to use the term that will gain the support of your friends and family the quickest. You can use the same explanation for celiac disease or gluten intolerance because they really mean the same thing for all intents and purposes.

Denial

Unfortunately, there will be some family members who go past minimizing the problem and believe you are exaggerating. They will deny you have an illness because there are often no outward signs a disease is present. When anyone around you refuses to believe you have a serious condition, the best thing to do is give them some documented materials with the facts from an impartial source. Perhaps if they read the statistics and the facts about the disease, they will become believers. If they still remain in denial, there's not much you can do

Unfortunately, there will be some family members who go past minimizing the problem and believe you are exaggerating.

except encourage them to ask questions.

Over Reaction

Of course, the exact opposite reaction to denial is the over reaction to the news you are gluten intolerant. In this case, family or friends make it their personal mission to protect you from the gluten protein. This happens most often with family. For example, your spouse learns more than you about the condition. Or your family is afraid to go out anywhere with you like a restaurant or to a party because there will be food you can't eat. One of the most tedious over reactions is one I call "smothering". That's when your spouse or children are so worried about you, they literally hover whenever there's food around.

There are a couple of ways to handle an overreaction. First, you can try to explain to the smothering person that living a gluten free lifestyle does not mean you should be stuck at home. Or you can show the person who overreacts that as long as you don't eat gluten, there won't be any problems. Then show the person your plan including restaurant cards, lists of forbidden and safe foods, and your gluten free pantry.

The important thing to remember when you're dealing with the reactions of others is the fact that all good and bad reactions have one thing in common: they are trying to deal with your diagnosis on their own terms. You have to be persistent and consistent in your responses to others.

ATTITUDE CHANGES

Dealing with the gluten intolerance diagnosis involves two broad goals. The first goal is to adopt the right attitude that will pervade all your future responses and actions concerning the gluten free lifestyle. The second goal is to actually eliminate gluten from your life. This book is dealing with attitudes and initial responses so it will concentrate on the first goal.

When you first react to the gluten diagnosis, the next step is to evaluate that response. Some people have no problem with learning they have celiac disease, because they're tired of being sick. For those people, you can jump right to the section that deals with educating yourself about gluten intolerance. But I recommend you continue reading this section, because you will probably go through some difficult emotions at some point. It can be so wonderful to finally find out what is wrong with your body, but after the initial shock wears off, the practical implementation of the gluten free lifestyle must be developed.

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Successfully living a gluten free lifestyle is a lot about getting and keeping the right attitude. After your initial reactions, you must stop and take the time to evaluate those reactions.

Taking Control

The first attitude change you must adopt comes through the understanding that you absolutely have total control of your life through diet. Being diagnosed with celiac disease is serious, but the great news is it's controllable through food choices. Celiac disease is not curable, but it's almost like being cured when you eliminate gluten from your diet. Your attitude change begins by accepting the following premises.

- A good attitude starts with a positive attitude
- Good health is a real possibility through diet management
- Keeping control of your lifestyle relies on having self-esteem
- It's important to learn how to be confident about your new lifestyle
- Becoming gluten free is possible with some dietary changes that are not radical

In other words, you have complete control of your diet after the diagnosis just like you did before the diagnosis. Eating healthy involves making good food choices such as eating fresh fruits and vegetables. You could have chosen to eat foods full of fat or high in sugar, but hopefully you chose foods that kept you healthy. After you are diagnosed the same rules apply, except now you must choose foods that don't have gluten in order to stay healthy.

Discovering the Facts

If you start eating a lot of starchy foods, weight gain is inevitable.

It's tempting to panic after the initial diagnosis and feel as if there's nothing you can eat except for basic foods like rice and potatoes. But those are exactly the kind of foods you should limit in your diet. If you start eating a lot of starchy foods, weight gain is inevitable.

What you will discover over time is that a gluten free diet can be loaded with interesting foods and recipes. In fact, the one thing you want to avoid is eating the same foods over and over again. A boring diet usually results in binging at some point.

The right attitude to have is that you must learn how to substitute ingredients so you can continue to eat the foods you enjoy. There's a lot to learn, but it's not difficult to master.

Taking Hold of Your Diagnosis and Moving Forward

Yes, celiac disease is for life. Scientists understand how the gastrointestinal system reacts to gluten, but they still don't know for sure why so many people develop this disease. There is no cure which means you must accept the fact you have a lifelong condition related to diet. You shouldn't feel sorry for yourself for longer than a couple of minutes at a time, because you're fortunate to have a disease that can be controlled. Just think about the diseases that are incurable and only get worse as times go by.

You have a choice once you're diagnosed as being gluten intolerant. You can feel sorry for yourself, or you can take a proactive approach to managing your diet and thus your life. It seems to me the choice is very easy to make.

Support is but a Keystroke Away

Right after the initial diagnosis, you might feel very alone for several reasons. You might feel complete separation from your life as you've known it. You might feel as if you are separated emotionally from your family now, because you're "different". Or you might even feel as if you're all alone in the world.

It can be downright dangerous intellectually and emotionally to feel alone. It doesn't really matter why you feel this way. It only matters that you understand that you are not alone because: 1) there are millions of celiacs in the world, 2) your family will never stop loving you and wanting you to be a full part of their lives just because you have celiac disease, and 3) you can find plenty of help to make living the gluten free life much easier than it would be trying to adapt alone. There are lots of great support groups in every city now. But if you can't find a local support group, please take part in the GlutenFreeClub.com online forum where you can find lots of people ready to share their gluten free stories and advice.

Anger Only Hinders

Anger is usually not a good emotion. It has its place in certain situations, but this is not one of them. Anger can be self-defeating in that it can interfere with positive

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feelings and actions. When people are angry, they either lash out or hold a grudge. Either way, the emotion cannot help you adapt to a gluten free lifestyle. The “why me?” syndrome will have you focusing on your diagnosis and not focusing on what you need to do in order to manage your health.

If you can't control your feelings of anger, I highly suggest you get professional help. Until you get over feeling angry, it will be very difficult to move ahead.

Educating Yourself

In the next section, I will discuss how you should educate yourself about what living gluten free means. With this education comes an understanding of the following.

- You can cope with the necessary lifestyle changes
- Life as you know it will change, but in your case that means you will be healthy again
- There are many myths about gluten intolerance and you will learn what is the truth
- Education brings self confidence and knowledge
- There are reliable sources of information
- With education comes self-knowledge so you are no longer bewildered

There are many steps to take when converting to a gluten free lifestyle. You have to learn which foods are safe and which are unsafe foods, how to de-gluten your life, how to stay gluten free in the real world, and how to motivate yourself to adhere to a gluten free diet. As the old saying goes, “Knowledge is power!” Gluten free knowledge gives you the power to control your health!

Family Attitude Changes

It can be much easier to change your own attitude then it can be to change the attitude of family and friends. After all, you can't force someone to read literature or accept the truth. This is where you must show some patience and persistence.

- Provide literature that explains celiac disease and why it's so important gluten be eliminated from the diet
- Show patience through frequent explanations as the need arises
- Give people time to adjust to your situation
- Don't complain about your condition or your family and friends attitudes
- Encourage questions so people don't operate on misinformation
- Show the family you are still a full participant in traditions and events
- When the opportunity arises, share gluten free foods with others so they can see your diet still includes nutritious and fun foods

I will not lie to you. It may be difficult at first to deal with all the family issues. Even family that means well may still find themselves excluding you from some activities such as eating at a restaurant. You may get your feelings hurt a few times unless you remember they were trying to protect you. What you should do is explain, when the time comes, that you don't have to be excluded. You can tell them which restaurants serve gluten free foods or explain that you can always find gluten free food on a menu even if it's a salad without croutons. Once your family begins to realize how the gluten free lifestyle operates, they will become more comfortable with the idea.

COPING WITH DEPRESSION

One of the most common reactions to the initial diagnosis of celiac disease is depression. But it's not just a simple case of feeling blue. Most diagnosis of celiac disease have followed years of uncertainty and illness. Often the depression develops long before the actual diagnosis. Then when you finally get the diagnosis, the final answer, it can result in momentary elation which is quickly followed by more depression. You finally find out what has been causing your illness, but must face the reality you will have to live with it for the rest of your life.

Defining depression can be difficult, because it manifests itself in a number of ways. If you have mild depression, you may have continuing feelings of sadness or pessimism. If you have severe depression, you may actually have trouble functioning in your daily life. Other signs of depression include the following.

Defining depression can be difficult, because it manifests itself in a number of ways.

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- Feelings life will never be fun again
- Loss of interest in things you used to care about
- Constant fatigue
- Constant irritability
- Hard time concentrating
- Difficulty sleeping

The problem with diagnosing depression in a person with celiac disease is the fact that many of the depression symptoms are due to the constant illness. In many people, once they get a gluten diagnosis, the depression goes away because they feel so much better. In other cases, the depression can actually deepen with the understanding there is no cure.

Different ages of people have different concerns that can lead to depression. Even children can become depressed. Children may experience feelings of exclusion because they can't do the same things as their friends at parties. Teenagers resent the fact they can't eat out with friends at what have been favorite restaurants. Adults are cognizant of the fact their whole comfortable lifestyle will have to change.

Of course, depression may also occur due to the damage done to the body after many years of illness. Chemical imbalances and biological systems not working properly can result in depression. The body is a system that depends upon the proper functioning of its parts to supply the needed nutrients. When it takes years to be diagnosed with celiac disease, it means your body has probably been deprived of nutrients for many years. The lack of proper nutrition can cause depression.

The lack of proper nutrition can cause depression.

The good news is that for those with depression due to malnutrition, their depression may ease or disappear after the body starts working normally again. If you have been having digestive problems for a long time and are feeling sad and gloomy all the time, you might be very surprised after a few weeks on a gluten free diet. Some people actually see whole new personalities emerge, because they are not burdened by constant sickness and worry.

On the other hand, some people get depressed after living a gluten free lifestyle for a while. Most people who experience depression in these situations see the gluten free lifestyle as restrictive. When you see anything as restrictive, chances are you will rebel

at some point. This is the perfect time to point out that having the right attitude can make the difference between falling into a depression or enjoying your new gluten free lifestyle.

If you see a gluten free lifestyle as being restrictive, I highly recommend you work on changing your attitude. You should see your gluten free life as one that keeps you healthy, and anything that keeps you healthy has to be good. In conjunction with keeping the right attitude, you should also try other ways to chase the blues away. One of the best methods is simply staying busy. It's much easier to feel sorry for yourself when you have time on your hands. You can join a local celiac support group and meet new friends and learn information that can help you keep your life on track.

Of course, there are plenty of other ways to stay busy. You can start an exercise program that takes advantage of your new found good health. You can volunteer at one of the dozens of charities in your area. Or you can find new activities to do with your family. The main point is to stay busy.

Hearing the diagnosis of celiac disease for the first time can be traumatic for many people. You must deal with your own feelings, the attitudes of family and friends and learn ways to change negative emotions and reactions. It sounds like a lot to handle, and that's why so many people with celiac disease must also confront varying levels of depression. But if you work to maintain the right attitude, you can overcome the emotional hurdles you experience during your transition to a gluten free lifestyle.

3 EDUCATING YOURSELF

RESEARCH METHODS

So far we have discussed the many possible reactions to a diagnosis of celiac disease. Reactions are emotional responses and can take many forms. But what do you do now? Odds are the doctor told you the results of your medical tests and then spent 10 minutes explaining what it means. He or she might have handed you a safe and unsafe list of foods, or instructed you to meet with a nutritionist. That's a good start, but you can't redefine your lifestyle in 10 minutes or after one meeting. That means you need to educate yourself on living a gluten free lifestyle.

There are many sources of information available, and new information is uncovered every day. As more and more people are diagnosed with celiac disease, and the enormity of the problem becomes apparent, medical research has increased its efforts to find causes, controls, and maybe even a cure. When you leave the doctor's office with your pamphlets and brochures, the next task is to find an organized approach to learning everything you need to implement a gluten free lifestyle.

The best way to begin your research is to decide exactly what you need to research. Following is a list of topics you should read about in order to learn how to develop an action plan. The "cure" for gluten intolerance is to eliminate gluten from your life. Obviously, the first step of your research plan is to learn where gluten lurks in your life.

The topics are phrased as questions you need to answer.

1. What is gluten intolerance?
2. What are the possible side effects of gluten exposure?
3. What are other words for gluten?
4. What foods contain gluten?
5. What are naturally gluten free foods?
6. How do I eliminate gluten from my kitchen?

7. How do I read labels on food products to determine if gluten is present?
8. What else might contain gluten in my house?
9. What do I tell my family?
10. Should my family go gluten free also?
11. Where do I find gluten free foods?
12. Where can I find gluten free recipes?
13. Can I ever eat bread again?
14. How do I substitute gluten free ingredients in my favorite recipes?
15. Can I eat out at restaurants again?
16. What do I do about eating while I'm traveling?

These are certainly not all the questions you need to answer, but it's a great list for beginning your research. One important point about this list is the fact that it is organized in a timeline of sorts. You need to get familiar with gluten, where it's found and how to cook gluten free first. Then you can begin making plans for eating out or traveling. In other words, your research should be taken one step at a time.

There are various research methods you can use and most people use a variety of sources. Before you begin your research, there's one important point to keep in mind. You should always verify your sources of information or only reference reliable sources. Your health is too important to be left to the advice of novices. The internet in particular has made it possible for anyone to give advice through blogs and forums, but you have no way to know if that advice is safe or accurate unless you verify the facts. There are lots of great research sites and sites dedicated to gluten free living you can rely on for information.

There are lots of great research sites and sites dedicated to gluten free living you can rely on for information.

The research methods or sources are the following.

1. The internet which will be discussed in depth in the next section.
2. There are several magazines dedicated to gluten free living.

EDUCATING YOURSELF

3. There are many books on gluten free living including reference books and cookbooks.
4. Support groups have been formed in many cities and online so you can access a support group almost anywhere you live.

THE INTERNET

The internet is a great source of information, but like any other resource material, you must be careful assuming the accuracy of the information you're reading. Anyone can write anything on the internet and much of the information is not challenged or documented. Fortunately there's plenty of valid information too, and you can find a wealth of data and good advice about living gluten free.

One of the best ways to insure you are reading accurate information is to depend on sites and organizations that are authorities on the subject. I suggest you keep a list of the website addresses for internet sites you can safely use for a variety of purposes. You really shouldn't use only one or two sites either. Even if a site is known to be reliable, it never hurts to continually compare data and information.

On the internet you can research important information.

- Print out lists of safe and unsafe foods
- Learn how to eliminate gluten from your house
- How to substitute gluten free ingredients in your favorite recipes
- New recipes for gluten free cooking
- How and where to shop for gluten free foods
- How to read labels

There are some sites considered to be the "gold standard" sites for gluten free research. They include the following.

- Celiac Sprue Association www.csaceliacs.org
- Gluten Intolerance Group of North America www.gluten.net

- Raising Our Celiac Kids (R.O.C.K) www.celiackids.com
- Canadian Celiac Association www.celiac.ca
- Celiac Disease Foundation www.celiac.org
- Celiac.com www.celiac.com
- And of course, my site, www.GlutenFreeClub.com!

Most of these sites have a link where you can locate a local support group. Each site is particularly good at providing specific information. For example, the Celiac Sprue Association site has easy links to updated government research news. Raising Our Celiac Kids has great information about keeping your children safe at all ages. It can be a challenge as they grow and their needs change, and moms and dads should take advantage of the information others share.

For example, the Celiac Sprue Association site has easy links to updated government research news.

I imagine the question you have right now concerns how you should approach your research. My suggestion is to follow these steps:

- Spend some time and review each site by checking out various links (it doesn't take long to figure out which sites are easiest for you to use)
- Take the first question on the basic list of gluten intolerance questions for directed research (What is gluten intolerance?) and read the answers on several sites; then do another question
- Choose those sites with answers that are easiest for you to find, read and understand

The worst thing you can do is attempt to navigate an internet site you're not comfortable using, because you will probably get discouraged. The key is to take your research one step at a time. First work your way down the topics list of questions and then you can begin learning how to create your own shopping lists. As you begin your internet research, you can also look for local chapters of support groups in your area.

SUPPORT GROUPS

There are two kinds of support groups. There are local support groups and you can actually attend meetings. There are also online support groups. I highly recommend you participate in a local support group if there is one in your area. It's very encouraging to talk to people about their experiences. You will quickly learn most people have had the exact same fears as you have in the beginning. You will meet people who have successfully maneuvered the transitional stage and are healthy and prospering.

You can ask questions on the spot too. This is a great advantage when it comes to researching local information about gluten. For example, you can find out where your friends and neighbors shop locally for gluten free food. You can ask about restaurants, fresh food markets or even bad experiences you can avoid.

The biggest advantage of joining a local support group though is being able to enjoy a common bond with people who are dealing with identical issues.

The biggest advantage of joining a local support group though is being able to enjoy a common bond with people who are dealing with identical issues. You don't have to pretend or hide or make explanations or fear saying something that will make people uncomfortable. You can just share what you learn, assimilate new information and keep abreast of changes.

Online support groups take the form of internet message boards, chat rooms and forums. These are sites on the internet where you can electronically talk to other people. I have to caution you though.

People can be free with information and advice they have not verified. Anyone can write anything on the internet. If you read something that sounds interesting, but you have no knowledge of through other sources, it's important to verify the accuracy of the information.

For example, if several people claim they have eaten a particular brand of food without getting a reaction, you still should call the manufacturer before you try that brand. For one thing, not everyone has overt reactions to gluten. The people claiming the food is safe may just not be aware there's gluten causing intestinal damage. For another thing, many people with gluten intolerances have other allergies also. You should check all the ingredients of the new brand before testing it on your body. Finally, brands change formulas frequently.

I don't want to make you believe it's an impossible task. It's a very possible task to live a gluten free lifestyle. The message here is to never let your guard down though and take information for granted unless it's a known reliable source. The Gluten Free Club

forums are great for asking questions though, and getting ideas from other people who have gluten intolerance.

Many of the comments you read on forums are by people who have had a hard time with some particular aspect of the gluten free lifestyle and are not sure where to turn. For example, celiac teens need help coping with eating while on a date. Mothers of young celiac children need assistance finding gluten free school supplies. Of course the site includes a lot of recipe sharing and good ideas for adding interesting food alternatives to the gluten free diet.

Support groups are a valuable resource for anyone learning to live gluten free.

MYTHS ABOUT GLUTEN INTOLERANCE

There are many myths about gluten intolerance. I want to talk about the most prevalent ones so you are aware of the truths right from the start. When you understand myths, you will be able to recognize them when they rear their ugly heads in conversation or in anything you read.

Myth 1: There are not many Celiacs or people with gluten intolerance.

Different estimates produce different numbers, but they all indicate at least 1% of the world's population has gluten intolerance. That's a lot of people any way you look at it. This is just an estimate too. It may actually be higher.

Myth 2: Everyone has the same symptoms including severe gas and diarrhea.

There are over 250 different symptoms identified so far that can indicate a reaction to gluten. The reactions can be mild or severe. To make it more difficult to identify the presence of celiac disease, some people have absolutely no visible or gastrointestinal symptoms. Though the villi in the intestines are being damaged, there's no indication this is going on. These are called asymptomatic people.

Myth 3: You can eat a little gluten sometimes without causing a problem.

No amount of gluten is safe for a person with celiac disease or gluten intolerance to eat.

Myth 4: You develop celiac as a child.

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Celiac disease can appear at any age. Science doesn't know what triggers the autoimmune reaction to gluten, and it can happen at any time.

Myth 5: It's possible to be "cured" or outgrow Celiac disease.

You can control Celiac disease through diet, but technically you are never cured. The "cure" is to not eat gluten. By eliminating gluten from your diet, you can prevent the intestinal reaction to the protein.

Myth 6: "Wheat Free" means "Gluten Free".

Wheat free absolutely does not mean gluten free. A food product that does not contain wheat may still have rye or barley or malt, all of which do have gluten.

Myth 7: Distilled vinegar is not safe to eat.

So anything that has been distilled is gluten free.

The distillation process results in the gliadin protein fragment being eliminated. So anything that has been distilled is gluten free. This includes alcohol also. Despite this fact, for some reason, people continue to believe that distilled vinegar is not gluten free. It's a myth that persists. The one thing you should remember about vinegar is that malt vinegar has NOT been distilled and so does contain gluten.

DEALING WITH DOCTORS

We need doctors, and we rely on doctors to care about our welfare. Unfortunately, celiac disease is not well known by all doctors. As a result, it takes years before most people even manage to get a diagnosis. And that happens only after the patient is persistent and insists on being tested for gluten intolerance.

Once you have been handed the diagnosis, you now have a different problem. You want to see a doctor who will stay current on medical research related to celiac disease. There is an increasing amount of research being done as the extent of gluten intolerance occurrences became known. New information is made available all the time. For example, oats were once considered to contain gluten. Now it's known that oats do not have the gluten protein, but do often get exposed to gluten through cross contamination.

Following are some suggestions for dealing with doctors on a regular basis.

- Consult with a national celiac support group to determine if there are any physicians in your area known to be familiar with celiac disease and gluten intolerance
- Don't let a doctor minimize your symptom(s)
- Try to always be direct and firm with your doctor
- Insist on diagnostic tests to look for other autoimmune diseases if your gluten free diet is not fully correcting your symptoms
- Ask the doctor anything you want to ask and don't be shy
- Make sure all your doctors have copies of any test reports for continuum of care
- Ask for advice on any topic where you need direction including diet, other symptoms etc.
- Don't hesitate to change doctors if you're not comfortable with your current physician's performance
- Insist on the doctor talking to you in terms you can understand

As a person with gluten intolerance, it doesn't matter how you have acted in the past with your doctors. From this point forward, you must take a firm lead in the doctor-patient relationship because of the unfamiliarity many doctors have with the disease. I'm not suggesting you should suddenly become the mean and grim patient who asserts his or her rights. Instead, I'm saying that you can't just accept a doctor's reluctance to order tests, or a doctor who shrugs off your symptoms.

For some reason, people are often hesitant about changing doctors – especially in the United States. But a doctor is a service provider, and if you're not getting good service, you need to find a doctor who will take you seriously. You don't have to be rude or impatient – just firmly polite.

4 CHANGING YOUR LIFESTYLE

Changing to a gluten free lifestyle begins with attitude. Anything you read about the gluten free lifestyle seems to focus a lot on attitude. There's a reason for that focus. If you don't have the right attitude, it will be almost impossible to adhere to a gluten free diet. That's because you will see the lifestyle as a burden instead of a way to produce good health. A gluten free lifestyle is all about good, or even great, health created through dietary control.

The best thing to do is create a quick 30-day plan to get you on the right track immediately.

As we have discussed, your very first steps after you learn you are gluten intolerant is to begin doing research on all your questions about living gluten free. After you do the research though, you still have to get down to a real implementation plan. You need to do it quickly too, because your health will continue to be damaged as long as you continue to eat gluten. The best thing to do is create a quick 30-day plan to get you on the right track immediately. Then as time passes, and you do more research, the lifestyle can begin to take form in a way that works for you.

This is an important point too. The only way anyone can adhere to a diet of any kind is to create a system that works for the individual. Everybody is different and everybody knows their emotional and psychological needs. If you are the kind of person that sees any diet as deprivation then the gluten free lifestyle will really require an attitude change. Living gluten free is so much more than just not eating gluten. It's all about being educated about gluten, knowing how to handle unusual and unique situations, and learning how to live gluten free every minute of your life. It's not a diet to lose weight. It's a diet to "cure" your reactions to gluten.

The 30-day plan begins by doing an attitude check! You must begin your new diet and health adventure with an excitement that reflects the fact you can finally be healthy! That's so wonderful and thrilling! You can be healthy just by not eating gluten. I can promise you there a whole lot of people in the world with health problems they wish could be handled simply by not eating something. You don't need medications or invasive lifelong medical tests. You just don't have to eat gluten. This is great news in every way.

Following is a 30 day plan to get you going. You can take this plan and adjust it to fit your life and family. It's just a guideline or initial plan that you can fill out as you become more confident living your new lifestyle. The primary purpose of the first 30 day plan is to begin immediately making you healthy by eliminating gluten. You

have the diagnosis and have done some basic research. Now it's time for a quick action plan so you can start getting healthy right now. As the old saying goes....there's no time like the present.

THE FIRST 30 DAY PLAN

The first 30 day plan for transitioning to the gluten free lifestyle will first and foremost include keeping everything simple. If you go to a bookstore and just glance at the books and magazines on gluten free living and cooking, there's a good chance you'll be on overload in short order. There's a lot of information available in print and on the internet, but condensing it down into a workable plan is the primary goal of this book. Every plan starts with a first step which is followed by a second step.

If you've read what the doctor or nutritionist gave you and have perused the internet, you should have answered the most basic questions. Those are the suggested ways to spend the first couple of days of your 30 day plan while eating foods only on the "safe foods" list your doctor gave you at the time of initial diagnosis. Following is a 4 week plan to give you guidance towards a life of good health and a diet free of gluten.

Week 1 – Don't Wait for Monday

Week 1 is the first week after your doctor has handed you the gluten intolerance diagnosis. This is a time of attitude adjustment coupled with an immediate diet adjustment. This is not like a diet you follow in order to lose weight. How many times have you heard someone say, "I'm starting my diet on Monday?" This diet cannot wait until Monday, because every time you eat gluten, physical damage is occurring. The gluten free diet must start the minute you walk out of the doctor's office, but that's good! That means once you get your diagnosis, you can start getting better almost immediately. How many medical problems can you think of where you can make that statement? I bet there are not many...if any at all.

The very first thing you should do is talk to your immediate family in the house where you live. You will have to explain your diagnosis and what it means. Most importantly, you should explain why and how you plan on making a safe gluten free pantry and cooking area that cannot be contaminated.

During week 1 you want to keep your gluten free diet extremely plain and simple. The first week is not a good time to jump into ingredient substitution and exotic gluten free recipes when you are still don't know all the food ingredients and foods that contain wheat. You can use the list your doctor gave you and make sure

During week 1 you want to keep your gluten free diet extremely plain and simple.

CHANGING YOUR LIFESTYLE

you have plenty of food in your house that is on the safe list of foods. You can eat fresh vegetables and fruits, plain meats, and baked potatoes or rice for dinner for example.

The important point is to make sure you have enough gluten free food on hand for meals and for when you get hungry. The biggest temptation to binge on food with gluten will be when you are hungry. If you feel the urge, just remember what it feels like to be sick and how good it will feel to be well.

During week 1, you also want to begin eliminating all the gluten from your house. During the first week, I suggest you concentrate on the kitchen, because that is where you will find most gluten. It will take some time to completely clean and reorganize the kitchen, so don't be too hard on yourself. It needs to be done right away, but you can do it over several days or the whole week.

During week 1, you also want to be doing your research and reading. You should continue working your way down the topics list and get comfortable with terminology. In order to properly clean your pantry of food with gluten, you have to begin reading labels.

Also, you should buy the basic appliances and designated pans you will use for cooking gluten free food.

Week 2 – My First Shopping Trip

During week 2, you can make your first gluten free shopping trip for items other than fresh fruits or vegetables you bought during week 1. There's something important you must do though, before you go shopping. You must do meal planning and make specific lists of foods you want to buy.

Your first trip to the grocery store for gluten free foods can be much easier emotionally and time wise if you limit your label reading. I suggest you do some label reading to practice searching for those words meaning gluten is present. But one of the biggest frustrations newly diagnosed people experience during their first grocery store excursions is the amount of time it takes to read labels. Some people get angry about the situation and that's not good. You don't want to start your fabulous new life as a healthy person by getting upset with something like grocery shopping.

With most things in life, moderation is the best policy. That's true for your first label reading trip. You can buy lots of the simpler foods to cook, read some labels and buy your first gluten free processed products.

Also during week 2, you should begin searching for other products in your house that may contain gluten. These include medications, makeup and dental items.

Week 3 – Sharing My Story

You may notice that I did not recommend you talk to all of your family the first week – just your immediate family. I don't believe it's wise to try and talk to a lot of people who will be worried about you until you're able to fully explain the situation. Not everyone agrees with this philosophy, and you must adapt this plan to your family dynamics.

By week 3, you should have mentally adjusted to the idea your lifestyle will be changing from this day forward. You will probably be going through some ups and downs, but hopefully the idea of a gluten free lifestyle seems very possible. You have eaten gluten free foods for 2 whole weeks, cleaned your kitchen and made your first shopping and label reading trip. During the 3rd week, you should begin cooking gluten free recipes.

In order to cook gluten free recipes, you'll need to find some recipes in the Gluten Free Club that you like. You can make a list of some tasty recipes, create an ingredient list and go shopping for those items. During this week, you should consider buying a bread maker and making your own gluten free bread. By making gluten free bread, you can begin eating sandwiches again or toasted bread for breakfast with your fruit.

By week 3 you want to expand your diet, because you don't want to get bored and start thinking all you can eat is baked potatoes!

Naturally, during week 3, it's important to continue doing research on the internet and by reading magazines and books. You want to read about:

- Planning meals one week at a time
- Ingredient substitutions – especially wheat flour substitutes
- Cooking techniques including thickening gravies, making bread elastic, or even baking cakes
- Cooking gluten free foods for the freezer
- More label reading
- Maintaining a normal weight

CHANGING YOUR LIFESTYLE

- Expanding your menu options

In order to avoid feeling overwhelmed, concentrate on the foods you CAN eat...not the foods you can't eat.

During this week, if you find yourself starting to have some doubts about the gluten free lifestyle, then it's time to regroup. In order to avoid feeling overwhelmed, concentrate on the foods you CAN eat...not the foods you can't eat.

Also during week 3, you will want to go shopping again, but now you can begin to explore alternatives to the grocery store. For example, you can visit a health food store or try shopping online. During week 3, you can begin to see how you will be able to eat an interesting diet even with gluten intolerance.

Week 4 – Expanding Your Gluten Free World

During week 4, you should investigate local support groups in your area. You can search for local chapters online as discussed earlier, or join in the Gluten Free Club forum. You will not feel alone if you have other people to share your questions and concerns with on a regular basis.

I may have what you find to be another unconventional suggestion. I suggest you eat at a restaurant during this week. This may seem like it's too soon for some people, but I think you should try and live as normal as possible, and as close to your previous lifestyle, but without gluten. People sometimes get gloomy, if not downright depressed, because they see the gluten free lifestyle as too restrictive.

You can eat at restaurants, and at friend's houses, and attend parties if you have done your research. So during week 4, I recommend you choose several of the large chain restaurants, and call their headquarters. You can ask about gluten free menu options. The Gluten Free Club also has a section that lists restaurants and links to their menus or sites. Please use it and add your own discoveries to share with everyone else.

After you find a restaurant with an option you would like to order, go out to dinner and practice restaurant techniques. First, you can practice letting the waiter know you cannot eat gluten. Then ask about the menu item you have already researched (the waiter doesn't have to know you've already called the company).

30 Day Guidelines

There are some things to keep in mind during the first 30 days you are learning to live gluten free.

- Don't get stressed when you are in doubt about what you can eat – simply don't eat anything you are not sure is gluten free
- If you accidentally eat something with gluten while learning which foods are safe and how to read labels, don't panic. Take plenty of fiber and drink lots of water and stay on your gluten free diet.
- Keep a gluten free treat on hand at all times
- Carry a gluten free snack with you in your purse or in the car so when you get hungry, there's gluten free food readily available
- Don't worry too much about overeating starches the first 30 days, but your overall diet planning should include a healthy dietary balance

The first 30 days can actually be the easiest days of the transition period, because most people are tired of being sick by the time they get a diagnosis. Following a gluten free diet seems pretty easy. The emotional roller coaster starts after the 30 days due to the realization of the ongoing effort needed to stay on the gluten free diet.

The first 30 days can actually be the easiest days of the transition period, because most people are tired of being sick by the time they get a diagnosis.

It's good to be aware of your moods and emotions. Living gluten free is possible for anyone, but it requires a positive attitude. If you have any emotional problems during your first 30 days, you should talk to someone and not try to bottle your feelings inside. You can talk to your doctor, a counselor or your family.

GAINING FAMILY AND FRIENDS SUPPORT

Within the first 30 days, you will most likely have talked to your immediate family and then your extended family about celiac disease or gluten intolerance. Spending time sharing information with your family and then your friends is important, because you need their support in order to be successful.

People around will react differently to your news. Some people will be immediately encouraging and supportive. Other people will be disbelieving and need convincing. Still others will actually try to "test" you, because they don't see anything really wrong with you. Then of course, there are the well meaning family members who just don't want you to starve so insist you continue eating family recipes.

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Gaining support may take some time, but those who love you will eventually become your advocates. Research has shown that people who have a supportive system of

It's much easier to convert to a gluten free diet if you have the support of your friends and family.

family and friends are more likely to adhere to any special diet. It's much easier to convert to a gluten free diet if you have the support of your friends and family. For one thing, they will be more attentive to your needs. If Grandma understands why you can't eat her cake, she will be much less likely to tempt you with a piece.

So how do you gain the support of family and friends?

- Thoroughly explain gluten intolerance and the impact gluten has on your health
- Explain the variety of symptoms and the fact the worse damage is not visible but still dangerous
- Remain firm in your resolve even when challenged and those around you will eventually understand the seriousness of the situation
- Forgive those who are slow to understand and show support
- Forgive those who become your ardent defenders in the gluten battle and go overboard in their defense sometimes
- Encourage your immediate family to eat gluten free meals as a family unit when eating at home
- Have regular family conferences to talk about the impact of your gluten free lifestyle on the family

Gaining the support of family and friends soon after you get a diagnosis is great. But even if they resist at first, you still must learn to follow the gluten free lifestyle because that's how you will get, and stay, healthy.

5 SOCIAL ISSUES

When you are learning to live gluten free the first 30 days, the home becomes a haven. Your house or apartment becomes the place you have made safe. It's a place that you have personally cleaned and you know there's very little chance of even accidental gluten exposure. But at some point, you will have to leave the house and join the social world again. That's one reason I recommended leaving the house and going out to eat during the first 30 days. You shouldn't become a hermit out of fear you will eat gluten.

No matter how long you choose to stay in the comfort of your home, eventually you will have to learn how to handle the many social issues and occasions that arise in your life. Handling these occasions involves more than just avoiding foods with gluten. You have to be emotionally prepared to handle questions, the food table and the urges to cheat.

Everything you participated in before your diagnosis, you will want to participate in after your diagnosis. Now you just have to make some special accommodations for your dietary needs. These situations include parties, holidays, business meetings and travel. The following sections will review each of these social occasions and talk about the related issues. These sections are not so much about how to handle the event itself, which has been discussed in a prior book, but rather how to emotionally prepare to stay gluten free.

FIRST PARTIES

There are many different kinds of parties, but the same rules apply most of the time. You may be going to a business party, a birthday party, a neighborhood barbeque, a dinner party or a family party. The thought of attending the first party after getting your gluten diagnosis can be a little overwhelming, but if you follow certain guidelines you'll be able to handle the party with ease. Once again, a successful gluten free lifestyle depends upon a good attitude and lots of planning ahead.

When you get invited to your first party after your initial gluten intolerance diagnosis, the first thing to do is take a deep breath and remain calm. Some people actually panic at the first invitation they must accept, because home has become a place where the guard can be let down. At a party, the food table won't have bowls of food labeled "Warning! Gluten Present!" Non-family and acquaintances have no way of knowing you must avoid gluten and will be offering you tempting treats throughout the event.

SOCIAL ISSUES

There is also the issue of cross contamination to fear even if you find food you can eat on the buffet line or party table.

Dealing with the emotional reactions to the first party invitation is actually the most difficult part of the event. After all, you can just avoid all food at many parties as far as protecting your health. But the feelings of 'being different' or the worries about standing out in the crowd can make anyone feel uncomfortable.

The best way to approach parties is through preparation.

The best way to approach parties is through preparation. Preparation can take the fear or worry out of almost any situation in life. I remember when I had to learn how to do public speaking and almost made myself sick worrying about giving public speeches to groups.

Then I discovered that if I am fully prepared, comfortable with the material and ready to handle almost any question, there's nothing left to fear!

The same principles apply to attending gatherings where food will be served. If you do all you can do to protect yourself, the worry will dissipate. Even if you still are nervous about the first event, you won't be for long. Following are some guidelines for attending first parties.

- Call the person who is giving the party ahead of time and explain your dietary restrictions
- Ask what is being served and determine if there is anything you will be able to eat
- Offer to bring your own food after making sure it will not offend the party giver
- Eat something before you go to the party for two reasons: 1) so there's no risk of watching other people eat while you're hungry, and 2) reducing the temptation to binge on food with gluten
- Carry a snack in your purse or car even if you can't bring your own food to eat during the party
- If you have found out what is being served, determine if you can eat any of it
- Review your safe food lists before leaving for the party or carry it on you and look for party foods you can eat such as fresh tossed salads

If the party is being held by people you are close to or are family, you can request that food you can eat be included in the menu. When my mom asks me over for a family dinner and birthday party, we always discuss what dishes can be added that I can safely eat. She even has blue handled tableware that means the utensils are not to be used in any other dish due to cross contamination.

Obviously, the better you know the people giving the parties, the easier it is to ask for special accommodation. But even if you don't know the people well, most host and hostesses will be happy to help you enjoy their party. No one wants a guest to attend his or her party and get sick!

HOLIDAYS

Despite holiday themes, they often seem to be all about food. There's Easter brunch, Halloween candy, Thanksgiving dinner and Christmas parties. Everywhere you turn during the holidays, there's food. People have baskets of candies, specially baked muffins, holiday cakes and family recipes used once a year. For the newly diagnosed celiac, this can be an especially difficult time.

The emotional impact of the holidays extends beyond facing the additional food temptations though. The holidays are the days when families and friends gather together and share traditions. These traditions almost always include food! There's Grandma's apple pie with the gluten pie shell, Aunt Jane's turkey with the gluten stuffing, and your mother's homemade wheat cranberry bread that won an award in a bake-off years ago. And you have to refuse all of it!

How you and your family respond to these situations is going to make all the difference. You shouldn't expect everyone in your family to understand immediately why you must suddenly forgo the family traditions. I'm sure most of your family will, but not all. You have two options. You can either get upset and storm out (not recommended) or you can try some of the following suggestions that have worked for other people in your situation.

- Talk to your family or friends ahead of the holiday and find out what is going to be served
- Ask if gluten free ingredients can be substituted in certain dishes, or if you can make a gluten free version of the dish to bring to the table

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- Be absolutely honest with your family from the very beginning about what you can eat or not eat so there are no hurt feelings during the meal when you have to pass on the traditional dishes
- Talk to your family about wanting to feel included in the meal, but needing to be careful about what you eat for health reasons
- Always participate during the holidays and don't hide out at home like a hermit trying to make people feel sorry for you
- Prepare gluten free holiday related foods ahead of time and keep them in the freezer or on hand so you don't feel deprived

Sometimes, it can actually be easier to deal with friends than it can be to deal with family members.

Sometimes, it can actually be easier to deal with friends than it can be to deal with family members. I could philosophize about this for many pages, but suffice it to say family ties tend to be more complex. You have a lot of history you must deal with in addition to the current event. But the bottom line is your family loves you, and by showing some patience, they will probably become your most ardent support system for the long term.

During the holidays you should make a resolve to:

- Fully participate in all events
- Approach the holidays with the right attitude
- Make a sincere and honest effort to help the people in your life understand your needs during these holidays filled with food
- Remain emotionally strong as food temptations are set before you
- Be prepared in advance before attending any holiday event

Some of the same guidelines that apply to attending the first parties apply to the holidays. For example, when you are invited to a holiday dinner, call ahead and see if you can get information about what's going to be served. If the dinner is going to be at a restaurant, use the same techniques you practiced during your first 30 days of transition. You can call ahead to the restaurant and find out what is going to be served. Then you can ask to speak with the chef and explain your dietary restrictions.

You don't want the holidays to be ruined, because you are emotionally distraught over food issues. The holidays may seem like they are only about food, but the truth is there are many other traditions related with every holiday. You can enjoy the holidays in their fullness and not let food become the center of the universe.

BUSINESS MEETINGS

Most people either work or volunteer with charities or belong to social clubs. In any case, there is a good chance you will be invited to a formal or official meeting or meal. Business meetings with food are very common, because food is used as both a reward and an enticement. If you're employed with, or have joined, an organization outside the home, you will eventually have to attend a business meeting.

Business meetings are a bit different than social occasions. For one thing, you probably have to attend whether you want to or not. Also, group meals prepared by restaurants are frequently limited as to the exceptions allowed to the menu. The business has paid a set fee for each meal. When you arrive at the meeting, the salad could be already sitting there and you have no choice as to what you're served.

There are some tactics you can use to make the meal pleasant without going hungry.

- Most salads are served without dressing, which means you can eat the salad if you remove any croutons (so far so good)
- Slowly eat any other food item you can eat; make the item last throughout the meal so you are eating as long as others are eating
- Eat lightly before the meeting so you don't have to sit through the meeting with your stomach growling
- Carry a gluten free snack in your purse or pocket to be eaten away from the table in private if you get hungry
- Respond politely to questions if someone does inquire as to your lack of appetite (sometimes I just tell them I'm not very hungry today.)

You might find yourself more tempted to eat gluten filled food at the impromptu business meetings held in the break room or conference room. There your associates will break out the donuts and homemade snacks. This leads to an important point. Sometimes you will have to just have steely resolve to stay healthy and not eat food containing gluten. That's one reason it's so important to carry gluten free food with

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you at all times. You don't want to get caught unprepared and hungry. But the world is not going to stop eating gluten just because it makes you sick.

TRAVEL

There could be a whole book written about how to handle food while traveling with gluten intolerance. Travel covers a lot of territory (pun intended). You may be planning a nice car trip with your family, a long airplane ride across country to attend a business meeting, or taking a European vacation to countries with different languages. Each form of travel is progressively more complicated for the person with celiac disease.

This book is about the emotional ramifications of the gluten diagnosis, so it will concentrate on your attitude towards travel. As we discussed about holidays, it can be tempting to become reclusive. This can mean either never eating outside the home on required trips, or refusing to leave the home at all if it requires eating. This is an emotional issue you should deal with if you find yourself in either category. Let's face it – we have to eat and the world never stops revolving!

The key once again, as it is for most situations in the gluten free lifestyle, is to plan ahead.

Traveling does not have to be a scary event just because you have gluten intolerance. The key once again, as it is for most situations in the gluten free lifestyle, is to plan ahead. Following are the most important guidelines you can use to make your trip the exciting adventure it should be even with dietary restrictions.

- If traveling in the USA, research which chain restaurants serve gluten free meals regularly
- If traveling by car or plane, carry gluten free food with you
- If you are going on a cruise, work in advance with your booking agent and the cruise line so a special diet is available to you during the cruise
- When traveling overseas, carry restaurant cards in the languages of the countries you plan on visiting
- Always do your research before beginning your trip whether it's to the next county or to another country
- Whenever possible, call hotel chefs where you will be staying and discuss the possibilities for gluten free meals

- Try to stay in hotel rooms that have small refrigerators and microwave ovens so you can make your own gluten free snacks during the trip

Emotionally, the important point is to not let your gluten intolerance interfere with your desire or need to travel. I recommend, after your first 30 days of knowing you are gluten intolerant, you take a short trip even if just for the day. It can be a “dry run” for gluten free traveling. Such a trip can go a long way to ease your fears about leaving the safety of your home. You can plan a trip, research restaurants, eat at one of them along the way, nibble your gluten free snacks and generally enjoy life. After you discover you don't get sick because of your preplanning, you'll be a gluten free travel expert!

6 RESTAURANTS

Sometimes it seems like all we talk about as gluten intolerants is attitude and preplanning. There's a reason for that though – those two things drive the ability to adapt to a gluten free lifestyle with style, grace and ease. When you read the comments of people who have been on a gluten free diet for a year or two, the common thread for those complaining seems to be boredom and tedium. My reaction to these comments is the people are not putting forth the right level of effort to keep their gluten free lifestyle interesting and varied. For example, they are eating the same foods day-in and day-out. Anyone would get bored eating the same food all the time!

You don't have to give up eating at restaurants.

Eating at restaurants is part of our culture. There are restaurants (and convenience stores) on every block it seems. People love to eat out, and that doesn't change just because gluten must be avoided. You don't have to give up eating at restaurants. You just need to do some research and preplanning (there are those words again).

PRE-PLANNING

You probably know what I am going to say at this point. The first steps you should take before going out to eat include doing research, contacting companies, and familiarizing yourself with menus whenever possible. Fortunately, more and more restaurant companies are becoming familiar with the prevalence of gluten intolerance. Some companies just want to be helpful and add some gluten free items to the menu. Other companies see a real marketing opportunity and want to attract business. It's up to you to find the ones in your area that can meet your needs.

Preplanning to eat at a restaurant includes the following steps.

- Check out the list of restaurants on the Gluten Free Club
- Choose those restaurants in your local area
- Look at the restaurant websites to see if the menu is listed and locate those potential menu items you can eat
- Call the company headquarters or the local chef and ask about the company policy on offering gluten free food menu items

- Make a “cheat sheet” of restaurants and menu items you have determined offer gluten free cooking
- Frequent the same restaurants so the staff becomes more familiar with your needs

By taking these steps before you attempt eating at a restaurant, you accomplish two things. First, you get the joy of discovering you can continue to eat out. Second, you get the emotional reassurance you need that eating at a restaurant can be safely continued.

Earlier in the book, while discussing the first 30 days after diagnosis, it was recommended you eat at a restaurant. When you eat out, the enjoyment comes not just from the food. It comes from being among other people, getting waited on and enjoying company during a meal. All of these things have nothing to do with the food itself. They are more about enjoying life in general. The next section deals with the issues that might arise during your first trip to the restaurant.

FIRST TRIP TO THE RESTAURANT

Once you decide you are brave enough to eat at a restaurant, the first trip can be the scariest. You can mentally prepare to talk to the waiter or the chef, but once he or she is looming over the table, it may not seem so easy. On top of that, your kids may not be thrilled that you have to ask so many questions. Hopefully, you have prepared the family ahead of time in anticipation of these new restaurant rules for your safety, and they have accepted your need to question the restaurant staff.

So on your first trip to the restaurant; you should have a familiarity with the current menu. You should also have a restaurant card that explains the basics about gluten intolerance. This is a card you can give to the waiter to show the chef if necessary. The cards can be found and printed from the internet sites listed in an earlier section, or you can make your own.

You should also have a restaurant card that explains the basics about gluten intolerance.

For your first trip, it might be wise to eat a light snack before you go to the restaurant. There are two reasons why a snack might make the first trip easier. First, hunger can make the gluten filled crackers and bread look too good to resist. Second, if you decide you aren't comfortable ordering food you considered safe, your stomach isn't empty while you watch others eat full meals. You want to be as kind to yourself as possible during this first trip.

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CHAIN RESTAURANTS

I have mentioned chain restaurants several times for many reasons. You can certainly eat at gourmet and locally owned restaurants, but for learning how to adjust to a gluten free lifestyle, the chain restaurants are the best place to start eating in the real world.

- They are in many cities and towns which prepares you for the day you travel
- Most chain restaurants have websites where you can preview the menu you'll be handed at the restaurant
- Chain restaurants can be very accommodating since they serve a wide clientele coast to coast and even around the world
- Menus are usually consistent from restaurant to restaurant
- You can easily locate the contact numbers of the headquarters and talk to a corporate level staff member about their gluten free menus or ingredients

In other words, chain restaurants can be very accommodating and the easiest to deal with as a novice learning to live gluten free.

In other words, chain restaurants can be very accommodating and the easiest to deal with as a novice learning to live gluten free. You will find lists of chain restaurants that serve gluten free menu items on the internet. When you look at a list, you'll be surprised at how many places now offer gluten free foods. Even fast food restaurants are jumping on the gluten free bandwagon. Following is a partial list just to give you an idea.

- Arby's
- Boston Market
- Burger King
- California Pizza Kitchen
- Chick-fil-A
- Chili's
- Chipotle
- Dairy queen
- Fuddruckers
- McDonald's
- Olive Garden
- Outback Steakhouse
- Panera Bread
- P.F.Chang's

- Smokey Bones Barbeque and Grill
- Subway
- Taco Bell
- Wendy's

There is an ever growing list of chain restaurants you will be able to frequent as the world embraces the gluten free world.

ORDERING FROM MENUS

Despite doing your preplanning and research, you might find yourself at a restaurant one day reading a menu you don't recognize. It might be you had a sudden unexpected meeting at a restaurant you have not researched. Sometimes companies change menus with little public notice. At times, a local chain restaurant chef will make menu changes in the restaurant due to ingredient shortages. It doesn't really matter why the menu is unfamiliar. It only matters that you are mentally prepared to face the challenge.

Fortunately, you can follow some basic rules to make it easier to decide if anything on the menu is safe to eat. You have to begin by using your common sense. You know what kinds of foods contain gluten and you should recognize terms that indicate cooking methods might involve ingredients with gluten. For example, fried foods require breading and most breading uses wheat flour. Therefore, you would not order fried food.

Other tips you can mentally store for the day you face an unexpected menu include the following.

- Order plain food without gravy, sauces, coatings or breadings
- Order simple salads with no dressing and ask for oil and vinegar (no malt vinegar) on the side
- Order your meat, fish or poultry to be grilled
- Ask for gluten free substitutes for pasta such as a baked potato or rice
- Don't order any food that you don't recognize or has been prepared using an unfamiliar cooking method

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Once you decide what to order, the next step is to ask the waiter a few questions about ingredients and cooking methods. If he or she can't answer the questions to your satisfaction, ask to speak to the chef or manager. If your food is delivered to your table and it appears there might be an ingredient used that has gluten, either send it back or ask more questions. One of the advantages of asking questions before you order the food is you get certain protections in terms of service.

As you continue your research into gluten free living, your list of topics should be expanded to include learning cooking terminology and cooking methods.

As you continue your research into gluten free living, your list of topics should be expanded to include learning cooking terminology and cooking methods. For example, do you know how they make a dish "au gratin"? Do you know if it's safe to eat a frittata? I confess I was not sure what a frittata was until I was diagnosed with gluten intolerance. When you do your restaurant menu research, make sure you understand the menu terms and what it indicates about cooking methods.

Learning to read menus to locate gluten free food is a liberating experience. You can learn to enjoy eating at a restaurant even with gluten intolerance. Living gluten free doesn't mean you have to completely change your lifestyle. It means you have to adapt your lifestyle. That's a big difference!

RESTAURANT AND DINING CARDS

I keep mentioning restaurant and dining cards, because they are an invaluable tool for managing eating in the real world. Actually, they are useful for eating anywhere in the world too, because they are printed in all languages. Using a dining card can save you a lot of explanation. It's also something you can hand the waiter to show the chef when necessary. Letting your waiter transmit such important information to the chef without aid is risky. It's like the old fable of the story that goes from person to person and gets completely distorted. Your gluten intolerance description given to the waiter can turn into a wheat allergy by the time it's retold to the chef!

The cards are very simple in concept. They basically include the following information.

- I have severe reactions to gluten.
- I cannot eat any gluten and am on a special gluten free diet.
- I cannot eat wheat, barley or rye or any derivatives of these grains. Derivatives include Triticale, smelt, kamut, malt, durum, semolina, bulgur, or malt.

- I cannot eat any food prepared using these ingredients in any form. I cannot eat bread, rolls, buns, croutons, breadings, coatings, soy sauce, or malt vinegar.
- I can eat corn, rice, distilled vinegar, potatoes, beans, and any NON-wheat, NON-rye, and NON-barley flour.
- Please show this card to the chef and see if there are any questions I can answer.
- I appreciate your help with keeping my meal safe for me to eat.

You can either type up your own card and have it laminated, or buy one card or even a set of cards from one of the gluten free internet sites. These cards are such a simple idea that works so well to give you peace of mind. The card also can reduce the amount of time it takes to explain the situation to the waiter and/or the chef.

The card also can reduce the amount of time it takes to explain the situation to the waiter and/or the chef.

So far, we have discussed how to handle the initial diagnosis and how to prepare yourself for living in a world full of gluten. But despite all your efforts, there may very well be a time when you accidentally eat gluten. How you should handle this situation, and the desire to cheat, is covered in the next section.

7 ACCIDENTS AND CHEATING

ACCIDENTAL GLUTEN INTAKE

No matter how hard you try to avoid eating gluten, there's bound to be a time when you accidentally ingest the protein. It can sneak up on you in a number of ways.

- You don't recognize a term and assume it's not gluten
- You misread a label
- You trust someone else's information and discover they were wrong
- You simply make a mistake

There is really not a whole lot you can do about the symptoms, once you discover you have accidentally eaten gluten. But there's a lot you can do about not getting too anxious. Anxiety is one of the worst problems people face who are worried about getting sick again after feeling better. There's a psychological impact associated with a situation where you feel great for a while and then the old symptoms suddenly appear after all your efforts to stay away from gluten.

I have a few words of advice about gluten accidents. First, you can administer a dose of fiber to speed digestion if you discover soon enough you ate gluten. You can also drink plenty of water in order to assist the digestive process. Second, you should make a note in your records about the circumstances and food that resulted in the accident. The only way to avoid the situation from happening again is to learn from your mistake.

Third, you should never trust anyone else's opinion about a food item unless you know for sure it has no gluten. That's why they have made stricter labeling laws and why it's important you always know what you are eating. Finally, you should never take anything to make you vomit. Some people believe that if they can only get rid of the food, it won't make them sick. But vomiting is extremely detrimental to the entire digestive system.

The point I want to make is that accidents will happen and you can't let them derail you for any period of time. If you fall off the gluten horse, you have to get right back on! It's really important to not let the occasional accident create a sense of failure or anxiety. You are only human after all, and all humans make mistakes. The thing to remember is that the occasional accident may cause some temporary problems, but you can get over them quickly by returning right back to the gluten free diet.

It's really important to not let the occasional accident create a sense of failure or anxiety.

A lot of times the anxiety over a gluten free diet exists because of feelings of loss of control. The best way to feel in control is to go back to your gluten free lifestyle where you choose what you eat.

TEMPTED TO CHEAT

I imagine that anyone who must adopt the gluten free lifestyle will be tempted to cheat at some point (or at many points). For starters, it's human nature to cheat when it comes to diets and food. In addition, since a gluten free lifestyle is for the rest of your life, there's plenty of opportunity to cheat. But cheating in this case doesn't result in a few extra pounds. It results in real health problems that can be severe. It's never okay to eat a little gluten and that thought alone can be distressful.

As you adopt a gluten free lifestyle, I recommend you prepare in advance (there's that preplanning again!) for the times you might want to cheat. This process begins by evaluating your desire to cheat on your diet. You may have a tendency to let your guard down when you're tired. Or you may get tired of "feeling different". It might be you just have low willpower and a piece of cake always has your name on it. A lot of people simply get bored with their gluten free diet. Some people get discouraged or unhappy or anxious or depressed or any other negative emotion that can interfere with clear thinking.

The first point I want to make about the temptation to cheat is that the feelings are quite normal. BUT, you are in a situation where any cheating can harm you, so recognizing the feelings as normal is not justification for cheating. There's no two-way street in this situation. You must learn to resist the temptation to cheat.

- Keep in mind the results of eating gluten (remember how sick you were for so many years))
- Keep gluten free snacks on hand at all times including in the freezer, in your purse or pocket, or in the car

ACCIDENTS AND CHEATING

- Bake yourself some gluten treats regularly including your favorite dessert
- Re-evaluate your gluten free lifestyle and see if you have made it too difficult to follow or if it doesn't fit your life like it should
- Determine if there are people around you constantly tempting you with the wrong foods; if so, find a way to stay away from them at least until you are more secure in the gluten free lifestyle
- Reassess your attitude about the gluten free lifestyle; if necessary, consider getting counseling if you're having a difficult time maintaining a positive attitude

The temptation to cheat is a normal feeling, but that doesn't make it permissible to act on. Yet, if you do cheat, you can't beat yourself up and use it as a reason to just give up on the gluten free diet. Instead, it should become a time of re-evaluation, reflection and a determination to get back on track.

ON THE GLUTEN ROAD AGAIN

"On the road again.....can't wait to get back on the gluten free road again....." That's not the real words to the song, of course, but it's the real intent you should have when it comes to losing your gluten free way. The first step you should take after cheating on your gluten free diet, or feeling strong temptations to do so, should be to evaluate your feelings. You want to understand why you were tempted to cheat, but you want to get back on track immediately. How do you do that? Well, there are a couple of things you can do to find the gluten free track again.

- Accept the fact you had a weak moment, but focus on the fact it was only a moment in your life
- Forgive yourself for not being gluten free perfect
- Put an immediate stop to any cheating going on
- Renew your commitment to a gluten free lifestyle
- Recognize that you can't learn everything you need to know in a few months and accidents will happen

- Above all, don't see a temporary lapse in the gluten free lifestyle as negating all your efforts; you didn't change your gluten free lifestyle – you only had one small mistake that can be corrected

Unfortunately, there is no instant “cure” for wanting to cheat. So much of the gluten free lifestyle is about emotions and intellect in addition to eliminating gluten. I wish I could promise you that you'll never want to cheat in your lifetime, but that would be unrealistic. Wanting to cheat is human, but actually cheating is dangerous to your health. The best thing you can do if you cheat, whether on purpose or accidentally, is to learn something from the experience and then go right back to living gluten free.

8 PARENTING

There are so many issues related to parenting a child with celiac disease or gluten intolerance that a whole separate book could be written. But this section will focus on the emotional impact of discovering your child has gluten intolerance.

IT IS ALL IN THE DELIVERY

People are always saying that children are like little sponges absorbing everything. This means when a parent learns his or her child is gluten intolerant, the reaction will be witnessed and internalized by the child. That's a fancy way of saying your celiac child probably adopt the same attitude as you towards the gluten free lifestyle. If you panic and cry and talk about how difficult and scary the whole idea is to you, then your son or daughter will see the lifestyle as scary also. But if you are upbeat and optimistic, then odds are your child will also be happily adaptable.

Your attitude towards your child's gluten intolerance is going to have a huge impact on how well your child is able to adapt.

Your attitude towards your child's gluten intolerance is going to have a huge impact on how well your child is able to adapt. Your attitude will also color your child's view of the world. If you teach your child that gluten free living is something you can do together, the child will learn that it's a healthy lifestyle anyone can handle.

There are certain emotional issues related to parents discovering their children are gluten intolerant. For one thing, there's a good chance you have already been through a terribly difficult time with a sick child. There are so many possible symptoms and some of them are quite severe in children. These include stunted growth and even evidence of malnutrition such as an extended belly. It's hard to imagine the fear a parent would have watching a child grow sicker until a diagnosis is finally delivered.

Psychologically handling the news a child is gluten intolerant really goes back to the same rules for an adult. First, you must remember your child's health problem can be controlled through diet. Second, you don't want your child living fear and missing out on the joys of life. Third, you need to make a plan for your child to live gluten free.

The great thing about kids is their adaptability. Your child will probably handle the gluten free lifestyle better than you! As a parent, you fight many of life's battles for your child. You will have to figure out what school snacks to fix, how to talk to teachers, how to protect your child at birthday parties and how the times your child

gets left out of festivities because of gluten intolerance. But if you take it one step at a time, just like a gluten intolerant adult must do, the gluten free lifestyle for your child is not so overwhelming.

Of course, it's only natural to feel some emotional trauma over the news your child has a "disease" that has no cure. The way to overcome this trauma is to deal with the facts.

- Your child can live a healthy life as long as he or she doesn't eat gluten
- Your child will learn to accept the fact of gluten intolerance as part of his or her life
- You will probably have more problems accepting the fact your child is gluten intolerant than your will child will have
- There are many positive aspects to a gluten free lifestyle, which means your child will learn to live a healthy life
- Your child has a much less chance of developing other health problems due to gluten than an adult has after eating gluten for years
- Your child will learn early in life that everyone has a special issue and his or her just happens to be gluten intolerance

As a parent of a celiac child, it's important to convey the attitude you want your child to adopt. It's up to you to help your child cope with the disease and to learn how to graciously handle what life has delivered. The next section discusses some tips for parents who want their gluten intolerant child to be healthy and happy.

HELPFUL COPING STRATEGIES FOR YOUR CHILD

There are several tips parents with experience have offered to help children emotionally cope with the gluten free lifestyle. One of the biggest worries is a child's need to be accepted. They want to do the same things their playmates do including eating cupcakes at the party. There will be many times when you have to help your child overcome sadness or grief over the fact they can't do all the same things their friends are doing.

PARENTING

Parents of celiac children spend a lot of time compensating for the differences. By this I mean they spend a lot of time coming up with gluten free versions of birthday cakes, play dough, candy and pizza. But helping your child to cope with the right attitude is something he or she will use over a lifetime to cope as an adult.

- Don't teach your child that food is bad, only that some food can't be eaten (use someone with an allergy as an example)
- Ask the whole family to participate in the gluten free lifestyle at home so the child learns to see it as something perfectly normal and acceptable by all
- Keep a positive attitude when answering childish questions
- Watch for displays of emotions that could be expressions of frustration or even anger
- Teach other health lessons in conjunction with gluten free dieting so the lifestyle is comprehensive
- Help your child remember how bad he or she felt when eating gluten
- Teach your child how to say no to forbidden foods and then give frequent praise as reinforcement
- Let your child be an active participant in the gluten free lifestyle
- Don't embarrass older children in front of friends by being overprotective (you'll never be forgiven!)
- Keep open communication going at all times

It's important to let your child learn how to care for him or herself.

It's important to let your child learn how to care for him or herself. For example, let your son or daughter help you bake gluten free cookies for school. Or you can even set up a separate cabinet in the kitchen that holds your child's very special cooking tools.

Above all, respect the fact your child is a unique individual with unique feelings and emotions. We all need to be validated as human beings. You love your child and want only to protect them. But in this case, the best gift you can give your child is the gift of independence and good health taught through the years.

HELPFUL COPING STRATEGIES FOR YOUR TEENAGER

As your celiac child grows, he or she will eventually become a teenager. The teenage years are tough enough without having to deal with the issues related to gluten intolerance. It can be a real challenge for parents to keep an open dialogue going, but that's exactly what needs to happen. You must talk to your child regularly and you must also watch for signs of food issues typical of teenagers – anorexia and bulimia.

You must talk to your child regularly and you must also watch for signs of food issues typical of teenagers – anorexia and bulimia.

It's easier for a teenager to adapt if he or she has been gluten intolerant for years. But if the diagnosis is made during the teen years, it can be difficult for boy or girl to accept. All you can do is watch, talk, love and offer ways to make your teen feel like life is not all that different from other teens. For example, you should invite your child to invite friends over and serve gluten free snacks.

A lot more could be written about the celiac teenager, but the most important tactic for helping your teenager cope emotionally with gluten intolerance is to talk....talk.....talk.

9 CONCLUSION

It wasn't that long ago gluten intolerance was considered one of the oddball diseases that only affected children. Today it's known that gluten intolerance affects millions of people around the world. That still doesn't mean it's an easy diagnosis to handle emotionally. After all, food is not supposed to attack your body!

This book has looked in-depth at the many emotional issues surrounding the initial gluten free diagnosis. You've learned that reactions to the diagnosis can range from disbelief to calm acceptance. You've learned that keeping a good attitude is the very first step towards successfully adopting a gluten free lifestyle. You've learned also that despite your efforts, there may be days of sadness.

Fortunately, by educating yourself on gluten intolerance, you can arm yourself with the sword and shield you will need the rest of your life as defense against potential gluten invasions. Thanks to the internet, you can read about any topic related to gluten intolerance and begin making a plan for changing your lifestyle.

A successful gluten free lifestyle depends upon maintaining a good mental attitude and lots of preplanning.

A successful gluten free lifestyle depends upon maintaining a good mental attitude and lots of preplanning. These two factors are the anchors of the lifestyle and can be called upon at any time. During your first 30 days after diagnosis, you have learned to get comfortable with the gluten free lifestyle through practice. In the first 30 days, you can do basic research, de-gluten your kitchen, begin cooking gluten free recipes, and even go out to eat once. As each goes by, it

becomes apparent that life is still just as good as it was before the diagnosis, and probably better. On a gluten free diet you'll get healthy for the first time in many years.

There are lots of issues surrounding the emotional coping needed for a gluten free lifestyle. You'll have to deal with family, friends, restaurants, meetings, parties and travel. You'll also have to learn how to not let the temptation to cheat or accidental gluten ingestion derail your gluten free lifestyle. To live gluten free requires a firm resolve to do what it takes to stay healthy. That doesn't mean you'll never make mistakes. It just means you'll never intentionally eat gluten again.

The gluten free lifestyle is a healthy lifestyle. I hope the suggestions in this book will help you through your first days as a person who has learned he or she is gluten intolerant. Just remember to always remain optimistic and never forget you have lots of company in the world!