



THE GLUTEN FREE FAMILY

**Practical Ideas And Insights On Eating
Gluten Free As A Family**

Angie Halten

Gluten Free Club

THE GLUTEN FREE FAMILY

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1 INTRODUCTION

Let's talk about the gluten free family! It's exciting to be able to do so for several reasons. First, it wasn't that long ago the extent of gluten intolerance occurrences in the general population was known. Second, it's great to share information that assists families with living gluten free lifestyles. Third, it's thrilling to know you have already decided to do what it takes to keep you and your family healthy.

Once upon a time, people suffered for years with the side effects of gluten intolerance, wondering all along what was wrong with them. Today, millions are discovering they must eliminate gluten from their diets and are taking proactive approaches to making changes in their lifestyles.

Living a gluten free lifestyle isn't just about going on a diet. If it was, your doctor would hand you list of foods you can eat and send you home. But the list doesn't tell you how to read labels, how to read restaurant menus or how to control your weight gain.

You see, living a gluten free lifestyle means living a full life involving many activities, and some of those activities are dedicated to keeping the family from gluten exposure. A gluten free lifestyle is a way of life, not just a moment in time. You don't "go on a diet" or temporarily "watch what you eat".

A gluten free lifestyle is a way of life, not just a moment in time.

Instead, you learn how to cope with family good intentions, what to feed an infant with gluten intolerance, and how to help your college age daughter get involved in college activities involving traditional gluten filled meals like pizza.

A gluten free lifestyle affects all aspects of the family life. Someone in the family must learn how to plan meals, keep variety in the diet and shop for reasonably priced ingredients and food items. There are birthday parties to attend, holiday events, midnight snacks and new recipes to try. Through it all you may be teaching a youngster, a senior citizen or just yourself how to stay healthy.

You notice I write that a gluten free lifestyle "affects" all aspects of family life. It doesn't "control" – it affects. You and your family will learn how to stay in control of your gluten lifestyle. The rewards are innumerable. You will look better, feel better and have more self-esteem and confidence in a gluten filled world.

This book is about you and your family. So if you're ready to start learning how to live a healthy gluten free lifestyle, it's time to start reading.

2 THE DYNAMIC GLUTEN FREE FAMILY

SUPPORTING FAMILY MEMBERS

You might be surprised to find you are beginning a journey of exciting good health as you become a gluten free family. Yes, it's a time of change but what wonderful changes you'll be experiencing! Not only will you be eliminating gluten from your diet for medical reasons, but you'll also be involved in a "project" the whole can participate in which increases family unity. Everyone helps everyone else.

Any family member can be gluten intolerant. It may be mom or dad, grandmother or grandfather, an infant, toddlers, school age children and teenagers, or college students. The gluten free family may have one member who must live gluten free or several members. After all, heredity has been determined to be one of the predictive factors for having gluten intolerance or celiac disease (terms will be used interchangeably throughout the book).

The theme that runs throughout this book is this: gluten free living is a lifestyle and not just a matter of what you eat at any particular meal. It's about being a supportive family for those in the group who must not be exposed to gluten in any way, shape or form. Just in like any other situation where a family member needs help, the house and family activities are designed to protect and defend the health and safety of the ones you love.

Truly this book is about living, not gluten free, but living as a gluten free family. Fortunately, it's easier than ever as doctors and food companies become more and more aware of the vast numbers of people who have gluten intolerance. In a free marketplace there's nothing more inspiring to manufacturers than discovering a need or market niche.

As the need grows, so does the availability of gluten free products and stores. There's a great variety of pre-packaged foods, shelf products and recipes available to make gluten free living not just easy, but FUN! Yes, you read right – fun. Gluten free living is as much about having the right attitude as it is about eating gluten free food.

If you think this is an exaggeration, think about it in these terms. Children love to think they are helping mommy. Husbands and wives can support each other's needs showing love and a concern for their welfare. The family can work together to create a safe haven in the home. Family members can show loyal support in public while eating at restaurants or attending parties. Everyone can work together to find new ways to make gluten free living interesting and fun.

You may not have ever thought gluten free family living could be exciting times. That's an attitude and you might reconsider how you think about gluten intolerance. Attitude affects everything we do and attempt. If you think you'll fail before you start, there's a good chance you will. If you think you can succeed with grace and style, then you will succeed and thrive.

I have no doubt in my mind you can succeed at anything you attempt and that includes living as a gluten free family. But before learning how to blend gluten free family living into your household, it's good to consider the different attitudes that often exist in various age groups as related to gluten intolerance.

Each member of a family may have special concerns and issues related to living gluten free. Though the family will operate as whole, there will obviously have to be different techniques used to help a teenager live gluten free as will be needed for a toddler. Understanding all the attitudes and issues common to various family members can play an important role in determining the best practices to follow.

Most of the time attitudes are positive, but there are also negative issues that have to be addressed to keep you family safe and happy. This is especially true for teenagers as will be discussed in following sections.

MOMS WITH GLUTEN INTOLERANCE

Every family counts on mom. She normally runs the household including doing most of the cooking. That means she is the one responsible for insuring the family gets nutritious meals, the kitchen cabinet is stocked and the kids are prepared for school. You depend on your mother to protect you when you're young and to help you succeed as you grow older.

The mother of the family holds a very special place, so when she has a health issue it can be frightening to both her and the family. A mother has much more than just her health as a concern. She wants to make sure she stays healthy so she's available for her

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children throughout their lives. Often, a mother's first concern is her children and not herself.

It's that kind of selflessness that makes mothers so extraordinary. They often never ask for recognition and just do what they have to do day after day without help. When diagnosed as gluten intolerant though, mom needs help too!

Every mother wants to protect her family, but she's also human. When diagnosed as gluten intolerant she must go through a transition period that requires an attitude adjustment. If you are "mom" and in this position, take heart that the new lifestyle you'll be enjoying benefits you and your family.

Moms who must live gluten free are inspired to having a good attitude about the change by the desire to maintain stress free transitioning for the sake of the children. You want to set a good example, teach the kids how to participate in a helpful manner and keep household happily humming along.

As chief cook and bottle washer (excuse the old expression), mom is the one responsible for protecting her health, cleaning the household of all gluten containing products and teaching the family how to help keep mom safe. This requires that mom be the first one to maintain a positive attitude, because let's face it – change can be very difficult for some people.

As a mother, you may also be faced with handling a different situation. Someone else in your family may be gluten intolerant and not you. But when you're the household captain, the safety of your "crew" is even more important to you than your own healthy. If any of your children are found to be gluten intolerant, you have to teach them how to live in a way that keeps him or her free of gluten. Once again, your attitude will have a major impact on how smoothly the transition will go.

Mothers are the ones who normally:

- Plan the meals
- Go shopping
- Cook meals
- Prepare school lunches
- Plan party food
- Clean the kitchen

In this age of equal opportunity, it may be you have a husband who shares the cooking and shopping workload, but in my experience it's been the mother who handles these

tasks. But if your husband does any of these things then he must also maintain a positive attitude about change and teaching others in the family how to help.

Mothers are smart people. You know that being gluten intolerant means that your life, and the lives of your family, will change. How that change is accepted is dependent on the attitude of mom which will filter throughout the whole family.

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DADS WITH GLUTEN INTOLERANCE

When daddy is diagnosed as being gluten intolerant, many changes must be made in lifestyle just like for mom. The difference is many men, unless a single man, rely on their wives to make sure the meals are gluten free. I know in this day of women's liberation that might be an unpopular thing to say, but the celiac blogs and forums prove this is a true statement.

Men who have celiac disease need to take responsibility for their own lifestyle. That doesn't mean suddenly becoming the cook of the house. But it does mean learning how to manage the disease.

- Doing research in order to be informed
- Assisting with meal planning
- Taking responsibility for meals eaten away from home

Daddy is just as important to the family as mommy. Each has roles within the family and functioning as a family unit is fulfilling and exciting. When daddy takes responsibility for managing his own diet and lifestyle, it teaches children about responsibility and team play.

This once again leads back to attitude. If daddy is diagnosed as gluten intolerant, and then just sits back and lets mommy handle everything related to food in the family, the result is often the husband blaming the wife for lapses. This is a situation the family should avoid, because it makes transitioning more difficult. It can also create a lot of hard feelings.

If your family doesn't operate according to the traditional model, then changing to a gluten free lifestyle means evaluating the roles each person plays within the family. If

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the husband does most of the cooking or shopping, then he will have to learn how to keep the family gluten free.

Single men and women diagnosed as gluten intolerant are fortunate today! They have plenty of ways to buy pre-packaged and processed gluten free food. Okay, maybe I'm stereotyping just a tad bit, that single people may not have the desire to spend as much time in the kitchen. Whatever your desire, know that there is an ever increasing availability of gluten free foods out there as time goes on.

In a gluten free family, children often look to the father for overall direction. He can set the positive attitude towards living gluten free. It's an opportunity to show the kids how a family all works together to keep each other safe and healthy. I don't mean to put a pie-in-the-sky spin on the transition period, because learning to live gluten free takes effort. But the attitude of the man of the house is just as important as attitude of the woman of the house.

GRANDPARENTS WITH GLUTEN INTOLERANCE

When the grandparents are diagnosed with gluten intolerance, it's often hard for them to change their lifestyles.

When you read the forums, people everywhere are struggling to find ways to help elderly family members live gluten free. Unfortunately, many people have suffered for years with undiagnosed digestive problems and are only finding out late in life they have celiac disease.

When the grandparents are diagnosed with gluten intolerance, it's often hard for them to change their lifestyles. They also have important issues that can make monitoring the transition more difficult.

- Live alone
- Set in their ways
- Have specific food preferences
- Difficulty understanding celiac disease
- Can't cook any longer
- Have other medical problems requiring dietary planning

Taking care of senior citizens who are gluten intolerant can present challenges to caregivers. Those who are very elderly such as 80 and 90 year old people often are set in their ways and figure since they've made it this long, they don't need to change. It's about attitude again in many ways.

Many senior citizens are in full control of their lives. They not only live alone, they travel and volunteer and live a more-than-comfortable lifestyle. For them the issues are more like the ones facing moms and dads. What foods can be eaten at restaurants? How can I prepare for travel? How do I communicate by dietary limitations?

But for the very elderly that are less mobile and already on limited diets, transitioning to a gluten free lifestyle takes more finesse and lots of assistance. Other concerns facing the senior celiac include the following.

- Limiting foods on an already limited diet
- Making sure regular gluten free meals are eaten
- Determining whether medicine is gluten free
- Finding safe and useful cooking appliances
- Buying higher priced gluten free foods on a limited income

Just because you're a senior citizen, doesn't mean you're helpless. But the fact is there are people who are very limited in what they can do in the kitchen or in the way of meal planning. They need help and there are many organizations that can assist.

Sometimes, the grandparents don't live near their children and grandchildren. That's a major hurdle to cross if one of your parents has been diagnosed as gluten intolerant. Regular visits by a home nursing group can give you the peace of mind your parents are taking care of themselves. When you visit, you can do many things to insure they are prepared to live gluten free.

- "De-gluten" the house or apartment from top to bottom
- Freeze quantities of pre-cooked gluten free foods in meal size portions
- Prepare a list of gluten free foods he or she can safely eat
- Have gluten free foods delivered directly from online stores

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- Spend time teaching your elderly parents how to make sure they keep their home gluten free
- Enlist the aid of a local celiac support group

It may take some imagination and creativity, but you can help the senior celiac in your life thrive.

Of course, many grandparents live nearby. In that case, the job of watching over them is much simpler and a lot less worrisome. You love your parents and want them to stay healthy. Helping them cope with being gluten insensitive may include living a gluten free lifestyle as a way of encouragement whenever they are in your house.

Another issue surrounding grandparents and gluten intolerance is family traditions.

Another issue surrounding grandparents and gluten intolerance is family traditions. Every family has a set of traditions that center on food. In my family, it includes fried chicken for birthday dinners, creamed corn and sweet potato pie for holiday dinners, and black-eyed peas for good luck on New Year's Day. Of course, I can eat the black-eyed peas but everything else is under suspicion.

Grandparents are notorious for wanting to keep family traditions alive. In fact, most of us look to them for the passage of traditions. If they are not gluten intolerant, it may be difficult for them to comprehend at first why you have to break the chain of tradition. I'll never forget when my grandmother asked me how I could be so insensitive as to change my great-grandmother's recipe for peach cobbler (another tradition).

I had to explain why I was substituting ingredients and she was okay with the change, because she wanted me to stay well. But that leads to this point: you have to explain to people in your immediate family how being gluten intolerant requires lifestyle and life tradition changes. If you provide the information they need to know the odds are transitioning to and maintaining a gluten free life will be easier.

BABIES WITH GLUTEN INTOLERANCE

The medical research community is working hard to pinpoint why people develop gluten intolerances. The most prevalent research to date (University of Colorado) has shown that people who are fed grain containing gluten when they are younger than 3 months, or waiting until they are 7 months old, significantly increases (5 times) the risk of becoming gluten intolerant in your lifetime.

When I read this my very first reaction was, "leave it to science to come up with this convoluted explanation". Then on second thought I realized it makes sense in many ways. A baby is a whole person when born, but not always fully operational, so to speak. In other words, the immune system or any of the other biological functions may not be prepared to process certain kinds of nutrients until the baby is 6 months old. Then introducing the gluten protein enables the better developed system to adapt.

This, of course, is a completely over-simplified version of the results of scientific studies to date. It's science 101 in lay person's terms. All I'm really trying to point out is that you might be able to reduce the chance of your baby developing celiac disease if you wait to feed him or her anything with gluten until they are between 4 and 6 months old (per the American Medical Association as stated in an article May 18, 2007).

Also, breast feeding a baby for more than 3 months can reduce the chances of developing gluten intolerance. Mother's milk is loaded with health protecting nutrients that also enhance the infant's immune system development. The immune system produces hormones and antibodies that fight inflammation.

Also, breast feeding a baby for more than 3 months can reduce the chances of developing gluten intolerance

The best thing to do is introduce cereal containing gluten proteins while still breast feeding. But despite everything, some infants will develop celiac disease because of heredity. It's hard to fight genes!

An infant that has celiac disease will not put on weight and will develop slowly. No wonder! They aren't getting enough nutrients just like an adult with gluten intolerance. And just like an adult, the key to controlling the disease is though diet. You stop giving your infant cereals and formulas with gluten and he or she will thrive once again.

TODDLERS WITH GLUTEN INTOLERANCE

Oh, those wonderful years in a child's life where they rock and roll learning to walk and talk and express themselves. They have their first birthday parties, their first chance to tell you what they want to eat, and their sudden awareness that grocery stores make all those candies and cookies just for them. He or she now runs up to the vending machine on chubby little legs and points at their favorite foods – most of which a gluten intolerant child can't eat.

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Sometimes it seems life revolves around getting to the next food or drink treat, and never so much as when you're a toddler. Life is full of discovery including good tasting treats. (I can remember eating my first tootsie rolls pops.)

When your child is diagnosed with gluten intolerance, some things just cannot remain the same though. In a gluten free family, a toddler that must learn what being gluten free means is a sight to behold! For one thing, you'll learn that toddlers are very adaptable. When you teach a child they cannot eat something because it will make them sick, they quickly figure out that getting sick is a bad thing. They can also distinguish between safe foods and foods that are not good for them.

I can remember my nephew at the ripe old age of three informing us he can't eat that, pointing to devilled eggs, because it makes him sick (he had a severe allergy to eggs). I learned right then and there how even babies can learn about foods good for them and foods they should avoid.

But that doesn't change the fact that toddlers begin attending birthday parties and family events and will be tempted by the treats. Other kids will be eating birthday cake he or she can't eat. The family will be talking about how great the homemade candy grandma makes tastes and he or she can't have any. You'll go to the restaurant, and before you know it, the waitress has placed a brightly colored kid's menu in their hands with pictures of hamburgers and buns, ice cream sundaes and hotdogs.

It may sound grim, but it's really not, because children who learn so young what they are allowed to eat are not tempted by such treats. In fact, you'll discover they will be so pleased to show mommy and daddy they can follow the rules proving how brilliant they are to the world (of course – there your children!)

At home, you will learn there are many options for feeding toddlers gluten free foods. They are not any more complicated for toddlers then they are for adults.

GLUTEN IN SCHOOLS

The situation gets a little more complicated for the child who is gluten intolerant and going to school. School, believe it or not, is loaded with gluten and not just in the food. Other places gluten lurks include the following.

- Glue
- Paint

- Crayons
- Modeling clay
- Soap
- Band-aids
- Chalk
- Stamps
- Pasta for craft projects

When you read this list you might be thinking, “This is awful! I’ll never be able to protect my child!” Yes, gluten does appear in the oddest places, because the protein quality that makes bread sticky and elastic, and stew become thick, is the same quality it gives glue and other school items that must be thickened (such as school paints).

Don’t believe you can’t keep your child safe, because you can! It just takes some pre-planning in order to insure the school is prepared. The first step is to teach the teachers. Several steps you can take include the following.

The first step is to teach the teachers.

- Prepare a written handout sheet you can give school officials including the teachers that explains gluten intolerance
- Make sure the teacher knows to inform you of planned projects so you can obtain gluten free supplies
- Prepare a box of snacks for special occasions such as school birthday parties and classroom celebrations; snacks should be similar to ones that will be served such as piece of cake or cookies
- Have teacher keep a supply of gluten free snacks at all times for unexpected events serving food
- Discuss gluten intolerance with the school dietician
- Check out the vending machines regularly and discuss allowable foods with your son or daughter

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Remember when we discussed how well a toddler can learn and adapt to being gluten free? An elementary school child is even more “teachable”. Let’s face it, no one likes feeling sick all the time and no one is going to purposely eat something that makes them sick.

With children it’s a matter of teaching them which foods will make them sick and which foods are okay to eat. That doesn’t mean you won’t be fearful as you watch your precious child enter that gluten filled school building. But if you have taught your daughter or son what being gluten intolerant means and how to avoid getting sick, you can only hope the lesson has been learned well.

Later in the book we will discuss making gluten free school lunches and party foods. We will also talk about grandma who refuses to say “no” (I think grandmas are preprogrammed to say “yes” all the time).

TEENS WITH GLUTEN INTOLERANCE

Teenagers are a species all their own. They have raging hormones, think they know everything and worry themselves sick over what their friends think about them. They are a mysterious blend of half child and half adult. This is the perfect set-up for having a tough time adapting to being gluten intolerant.

Teenagers often suffer silently when they mistakenly decide telling the truth will affect their image. If you remember being an adolescent, then it shouldn’t be too difficult to recall how important image is to a teen. They worry about their weight, makeup, what their friends are doing, being part of a group, having friends, and “being cool” (or whatever is the current word for being one of the in-crowd).

Apparently these worries are built in the teenager’s genes. It’s a physiological state-of-being. The problem is gluten intolerance impacts the ability to eat foods teenagers love to eat. Celiac disease can also affect skin condition and weight.

You can probably already see where this discussion is going. Later in the book there will be a specific discussion about these issues and how to monitor the silent teenager. Don’t forget – you’re the parent and don’t know anything! Teenagers can have such difficult problems they merit a special section all their own.

YOUNG ADULTS WITH GLUTEN INTOLERANCE

Most college students begin their new status as teenagers and pass into official adulthood while away from the parents. As college students, they must learn to care for their own needs and health. Mom and dad are not around every day to monitor how he or she looks, what's being eaten and the general status of health.

In addition, it can be a shock to a new college student when mom is no longer there to cook "safe foods". Young college students often have difficulty dealing with the fact they can't eat the pizza in the dorm room with the roommates, or must be suspicious of foods in the cafeteria.

Once again, learning to live a gluten free life begins in the home and then radiates out into the "real world". In other words, it's hoped you have taught your college bound son and daughter well enough for them to be prepared for traditional college events.

Once again, learning to live a gluten free life begins in the home and then radiates out into the "real world".

College students with gluten intolerance can use some of the following techniques and tips to be prepared to handle cafeteria food and dorm living.

- Talk to the college dietician before moving to campus; schedule a meeting to discuss dietary restrictions so you can get a "fix" on what will be possible and what is an impossibility in terms of menu
- Check out the restaurants most frequently visited by the students and learn which food items are gluten free; this makes it easier when you go out with friends
- Plan to keep gluten free snacks in your dorm room
- Learn which grocery stores and health food markets near campus sell gluten free foods
- Teach your roommates about your need to avoid exposure to gluten; most roommates will go out of their way to help their new friends
- Talk mom into sending you regular gluten free care packages

The pizza issue always seems to be one of the biggest problems for students of all ages. By the pizza issue I mean attending a party and not being able to eat pizza at a pizza party. This problem crosses over all age groups too.

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I think it's not the pizza itself that's the problem. Pizza becomes more a symbol of the difference between someone who can eat without concern and someone who is gluten intolerant. People who have celiac disease are "different" and nothing makes that difference stand out more than not being able to eat pizza at a party (or ice cream or salad dressing on the salad or.....)

3 LIFESTYLE CHANGES

ESTABLISHING GLUTEN FREE FAMILY RULES

The first step to take towards becoming a gluten free family is to take what I call an “attitude measure”. You will continue to read a lot about attitude, because it will have such a major impact on your ability to remain gluten free. I could just tell you, “don’t eat gluten”, but if your attitude is wrong, you’ll probably eat it anyway!

A gluten free family can be a healthy and happy family that doesn’t let the gluten free diet ruin anything in their life. It doesn’t ruin family parties, birthday parties or holidays. It doesn’t restrict you or your family members from having fun either. That’s because you can continue to eat your favorite foods, but they have to be cooked with different ingredients.

Voila! The right attitude has changed your perspective from one of deprivation to one of change. You did it without eating a single bite of food either. It’s all in the attitude (sorry to sound like a broken record).

New family rules must be established in order to make and keep house gluten free. A lot of them are inevitably related to the kitchen. After all, gluten intolerance is a food problem. But some of the rules are related to family attitudes (there I go again).

New family rules must be established in order to make and keep house gluten free.

- Family members should learn to be supportive of the person who is gluten intolerant (don’t offer your teenage sister a piece of pizza)
- Separate the gluten free and gluten filled items in the kitchen; the rule is they are never to be reunited again
- Designated kitchen utensils and cooking pots are not to be used for other food cooking
- Everyone (except for infants and toddlers) learns about gluten intolerance and what it means

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- Everyone in the family learns to read labels so there are no mistakes made when cooking or shopping
- The person who has gluten intolerance should join a support group and sometimes family members should attend with them as a sign of support and to learn the latest on disease maintenance

The big question that needs to be answered is the following: Is everyone in the family going to follow a gluten free lifestyle? Answers will vary, of course, because nothing in life is black and white.

THE WHOLE FAMILY – GLUTEN FREE

It's hard to imagine anyone wanting to cook multiple versions of the same meal day in and day out. It sounds like it would be a lot of unnecessary trouble, unless there are always two cooks in the kitchen.

Some families actually do keep separate menus. But the family member who is gluten intolerant must take care that their meal isn't always the one that suffers due to lack of time and effort.

In some families, there's resistance to following a gluten free diet as a matter of principle. If only one person is gluten intolerant then the family might decide they don't want to put themselves on the same restrictions.

Of course, one of the biggest advantages to the entire family going gluten free is less worry is necessary about gluten contamination. It certainly makes it easier for the person cooking gluten free meals if they don't have to worry about cross contamination.

There's another option. The meals and pantry can be maintained as gluten free, but special gluten filled snacks can be maintained in separate containers. It's almost like living the opposite of gluten free. Instead of separating the gluten free foods, the ones with gluten take up the least amount of space. They are for the taking by those who have convinced themselves they just have to have some gluten food, because they're not the one who's gluten intolerant.

TWO DIET HOUSEHOLDS

Some families don't like to have the whole family live a gluten free lifestyle, because they like what gluten does to food. That sounds strange at first, but the gluten protein adds elasticity to dough and makes bread rise working in conjunction with yeast.

Gluten free foods tend to be heavier and drier (though that will change as new products and techniques continue to be introduced to the market).

Also products like xanthan gum have eliminated many of the problems with gluten free flours.

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Some people simply don't want to give up some of their favorite foods. Not everyone is willing to go on a special diet of any kind when they don't need to restrict the food they eat. If you have a very selfless family that may sound a bit odd to you, but every family is unique. It never pays to be judgmental because there's no way you can have all the information you need.

It's like not all family members decide to go vegetarian just because one member does. Not everyone gives up sugar because one family member is on a diet.

Another important consideration is the fact the world is not gluten free. At home you try to teach your children about the real world, so it makes sense to let your gluten intolerant children learn to operate in a world that has gluten in it. Otherwise how are they going to learn how to say "no" to the wrong foods when you're not around?

The fact is each family must decide how to adapt to one or more members being gluten intolerant. What works for one family may not work for another. But the easier you make it to stay gluten free the easier it will be to resist temptation. Temptation is a major factor in a gluten free life. It's a lot easier to say no to a late night snack with gluten when it's not anywhere within reach.

NUTRITIONALLY BALANCED DIETS

The gluten free family has its work cut out for it making sure that nutrition is not just balanced, but provides the nutrients needed to supplement shortages caused by celiac disease. Because gluten intolerance causes intestinal damage, nutrients are not absorbed the way they should be. This results in vitamin and mineral shortages.

The gluten free diet must accomplish several goals.

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- Naturally, the gluten free diet must ... well... eliminate gluten of course...
- A gluten free diet must provide a healthy diet with essential nutrients
- It must not overcompensate for the need to eliminate gluten at the sake of nutrition
- Gluten free diet must not rely on carbohydrates and sugar for comfort food substitutes

When the mother is gluten intolerant and also does the cooking, the family may not even notice a difference in the food because of the power of ingredient substitution. The variety of gluten free flours and starches has made it possible to cook gluten free with little or no flavor and consistency loss in most dishes.

But that doesn't change the fact that the overall diet must still accommodate the need for nutrition. Everyone needs to take responsibility for their health. Even children, as we discussed, can learn what's good for them and what can harm the body. It's only a short step to instructing your kids about how total nutrition impacts health.

Of course, when you have gluten intolerance, it's more complicated than just teaching how to eat a balanced meal. The food pyramid still applies, but food choices must address more than just basic nutrients. The gluten free family must choose foods from the food groups that provide the essential nutrients and supplies additional vitamins and minerals for health issues related to having a digestive disease.

In the next section, we'll discuss cooking at home for the gluten free family.

MEAL DIVERSITY

When you first begin the transition to a gluten free lifestyle, mealtime can suddenly be a lot less interesting. After all, you can't eat whatever you want, and you can't eat a lot of your favorite foods. It even seems food might be the "enemy" because it's supposed to keep you alive, not hurt you.

I know this may sound a bit odd at first, but I was almost mad at food (told you it would sound strange). But then I began to look at it like this: many people must deal with the fact they can't eat certain kinds of foods. People who have allergies must

avoid certain foods. Some people are overweight and must eliminate foods high in sugar and carbohydrates. Food can be a problem as much as it can be a help.

So I changed my attitude quickly and approached mealtime with a new resolve – to stay healthy and enjoy doing so. One of the problems to avoid though is preparing boring meals with no pizzazz. Initially preparing boring and safe meals everyday can be a real temptation at first, out of worry related to eating the wrong foods. You may want to play it safe for a while and not be too adventurous.

Unfortunately, it doesn't take long to get bored with uninspired meals. No one wants to eat the same meals all the time. When meals are boring, the greatest threat to your health becomes the temptation to cheat!

Getting bored can derail any special diet, because most people need variety in their life. The old saying, "variety is the spice of life" was probably invented by a person eating broccoli and salad for dinner every day for a year.

When meals are boring, the greatest threat to your health becomes the temptation to cheat!

Meal diversity means serving a variety of dishes so eating doesn't become a boring chore. If the family decides everyone will eat gluten free meals, then meals need to accomplish several goals.

- Gluten free kids need to enjoy variety to teach them a gluten free diet can be just as much as fun as what other kids are eating
- Meals should be varied in order to introduce a balance of nutrients into the diet
- Help the person who is gluten intolerant avoid the temptation to eat forbidden foods
- Makes meals as "normal" as possible and not seem like the whole family is on a diet
- Reinforces the fact a gluten free diet is for a lifetime and is not just a temporary diet

Obviously, if you are going to plan on having a variety of foods and recipes, you must do some planning ahead. You can't just run to the grocery store and start grabbing things off the shelf. My sister calls it the "it only takes 5 minutes in the microwave" decision making system. As you will see later in the book, you will learn shopping and meal planning techniques for the gluten free family.

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CONTROLLING HUNGER

Before we get too deep into a discussion about meal planning and nutrition, there's one important point I want to make. Don't let yourself get too hungry. Studies have shown that if you go to the grocery store hungry, you'll spend more money on impulse food buying. The same thing is true for choosing what foods to eat. If you allow yourself to get too hungry, you'll be so tempted to eat foods containing gluten that are handy.

Hunger is an uncomfortable feeling that demands attention. If you get hungry and there's no gluten free snacks on hand, you will be tempted to cheat on your diet despite all your good intentions. You should always keep a quantity of gluten free snacks on hand designed for the person with celiac disease. If it's you, then keep your favorite fruit or home-made trail mix on hand. If it's your son or daughter, keep a healthy snack they know is safe to eat.

By the way, you really don't want to go shopping when hungry either. Not only will you tend to spend more, but you'll feel more rushed to get the shopping done. You could end up buying food you don't really want and can't eat.

BALANCING CARBOHYDRATES

Carbohydrates have become the villain of food nutrients. It seems like everyone is

But carbohydrates are just as important to the body as proteins and fats.

counting carbs in order to lose or maintain weight, control insulin levels or just to be able to say they are nutrition savvy. But carbohydrates are just as important to the body as proteins and fats. It's just that the amount of carbohydrates must be managed.

When you are planning home meals for the gluten free family, an important piece of information to know is that gluten free breads have more carbohydrates than regular wheat bread. Normally the equation says that one carb is the same as 15 grams. When you make bread with gluten free flour, the same piece of bread contains more than one carb.

Obviously, if you eat more carbs you are going to affect either your body insulin levels or your weight. There is a real temptation for people who are newly diagnosed with gluten intolerance to replace their gluten foods with high calorie non-gluten foods that are also high in carbohydrates, fats and sugars. We all have a natural tendency to turn to "comfort food".

The family gluten free meals and snacks should avoid significantly raising the amount of carbohydrates in the diet. Children and teenagers can have a really tough time with this as they transition to gluten free diets. For example, because they can't eat cake anymore they will have a greater tendency to eat candy. Kids are also the most likely to have problems with turning down unplanned food thrust in their path.

Carbohydrates affect your body in several ways.

- Blood sugar levels
- Weight
- Energy levels
- Hunger

Eat too many carbohydrates, and the body's sugar levels rise which affects insulin production. This creates drastic rises and falls in your blood sugar. That's why you feel energetic after eating an iced piece of cake, and then suddenly tired.

Many of the foods your gluten free family can eat include foods high in carbohydrates and fat. For example, you can eat the following foods.

- Corn
- Potatoes
- Yams
- Cheese
- Butter
- Rice

If you start eating a lot of these food items as compensation for not being able to eat white bread, it won't take long before you've developed a new health problem such as Type 2 diabetes or obesity.

So the first rule of thumb is to cook gluten free meals that don't increase the amount of carbohydrates in the diet.

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KEEPING FIBER IN THE DIET

Gluten free diets don't have nearly as much fiber in them as a gluten filled diet. You aren't eating grains and cereals which are the biggest source of fiber in the diet. Yet fiber is crucial to a person with gluten intolerance, because it keeps the digestive system working properly.

When you have gluten intolerance, the intestines have been damaged and nutrients are not being properly absorbed into the body. Fiber helps the intestines work the way they are intended to work. In fact, when people accidentally eat gluten, many drink lots of water and fiber in order to clean out the intestines before the damage can be caused.

Getting enough fiber in the diet is important for both children and adults. Fiber assists in controlling cholesterol levels. Fiber also makes you feel full so you're not tempted to cheat and eat improper foods. In addition, fiber is an important nutrient that's an integral player in a balanced diet.

Fiber assists in controlling cholesterol levels.

Many people transitioning to a gluten free diet end up eliminating too much fiber and adding too much fat. Adding fiber to the diet should be done gradually if that is true in your family. But fiber is also present in some of the healthiest foods you can find. Fiber is in some of the gluten free grains/grasses and in fresh fruits and vegetables. Making sure the family gluten free meals are healthy and balanced today will avoid creating health issues such as heart disease tomorrow.

CONTROLLING WEIGHT GAIN

People with gluten intolerance are often malnourished, because their bodies are not getting enough food. One of the symptoms in a child with celiac disease is lack of normal growth in stature, because he or she is missing important nutrients needed for normal growth. As we will see in the discussion on teenagers in a later section, a gluten intolerant adolescent is often very thin.

Of course, no two people are the same and it's a generalization to even say most people with celiac disease are underweight. There are actually people with gluten intolerance who are overweight. They are overweight because they're eating the wrong foods – foods high in carbohydrates, fats and sugars. But large numbers of people are thin or underweight, because the intestines are not absorbing nutrients from the food eaten.

When you learn you are gluten intolerant, and begin to make changes in the diet, the intestines heal. Once the villi damage is reversed, the body begins receiving nutrients again. In addition, the intestines can begin absorbing fats and carbohydrates it could not absorb previously.

So what happens when you absorb more carbohydrates and sugar? You will probably gain weight. Another cause of weight gain is the result of eating the wrong foods as discussed earlier. If you replace white bread with more gluten free bread, you're going to gain weight in all probability. If you eat corn and potatoes regularly, you are increasing your carbohydrate levels.

Some people also make the mistake of eating more of the wrong kinds of foods which can cause weight gain. If you eat more fatty meat and more sugary sweets, you are going to gain weight.

The gluten free family meals should introduce foods that do not contribute to an increase in calories but do provide the right balance of carbohydrates, fats, proteins and vitamins and minerals.

Some weight gain is expected, but you should try not to continue gaining until you're overweight. You have to be careful the family doesn't start eating gluten free foods with the idea they can eat all they want! You can get just as heavy eating gluten free cookies as you can eating cookies made with wheat flour.

Protein can combat weight gain, by making you feel fuller for longer periods of time. That's why so many diets promote high protein and low carbohydrate meals. But it's never good to be extreme on any diet with one exception – NO gluten in your meals!

Protein can combat weight gain, by making you feel fuller for longer periods of time.

DINING OUT

The gluten free family may feel a bit homebound at first, but that'll change. I don't know about you, but I like eating out. I was afraid at first, but I really got tired of cooking so I overcame my fear (funny how that works, isn't it). Being pampered every now and then, especially if you have children at home, becomes one of life's necessities.

Family meal planning is going to include eating out at restaurants. In order to enjoy the experience though, you'll have to learn how to choose restaurants, read the menu and identify foods you can safely eat. The menu doesn't come with any "gluten-free"

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assurances most of the time, and unless you join the chef in the kitchen, you have no idea how something is cooked.

The one thing you don't want to do as a gluten intolerant person is isolate yourself. Living in your safe world at home may be comforting most of the time, but if you have any zest for life at all, you'll want to go out sometimes. You can learn to feel comfortable in the gluten filled world with some preplanning and an understanding of how food is prepared in the chef's world.

Choosing the Restaurant

Choosing a restaurant that you are comfortable will serve gluten free food can be accomplished in a number of ways.

- Locate favorite chain restaurants in the area and then talk to corporate headquarters about your need for gluten free food; find out if there are any menu items that are always gluten free
- Visit the local restaurant and talk to the cooks
- Prepare a written card with a brief statement the waiter can show to the chef
- Call ahead to the restaurant, explain the need for gluten free food and ask if they have standard menu items
- Pick restaurants that traditionally cook foods without gluten such as Mexican or Indian food
- Choose restaurants that offer food cooked without breading such as steak and seafood, or soup and salad bars

There are plenty of restaurant chains that offer gluten free menu items. This includes both fine dining and fast food restaurants. But you have to be careful you don't

You should do your research first and then build a list of restaurants that serve food you can safely eat.

sacrifice a healthy diet for nutrition starved menu food. Many of the chain restaurants add lots of fat and carbohydrates (the very items we just discussed) to their recipes for flavor.

The same rules apply whether you're planning on eating at the steak house or at the local fast food drive-in. You should do your research first and then build a list of restaurants that serve food you can safely

eat.

The gluten free family eating out can be a very enjoyable experience, but the family must be appreciative of the fact the waiter and/or chef will have to be queried. This can cause some embarrassment if not handled delicately.

Reading the Menu

There are plenty of guidelines you can follow that have been created by other people who can't eat gluten. It always pays to take the advice of people who have "been here...done that" and got the gluten-free tee shirt.

- Learn cooking terms so you know how something has been cooked
- Always ask about cooking methods as a double check
- Never accept an uncertain answer from the restaurant as to whether a menu item is gluten free
- Order food that does not have sauces or gravies
- Order menu items that are as close to their natural state as possible
- Learn ethnic food terms before going to the restaurant

Eating out is an integral part of American culture. We meet friends at restaurants. We celebrate at restaurants. We reward ourselves by eating out. We have business meetings at restaurants. When you see the number of restaurants being built, you almost wonder why they bother to include kitchens in house floor plans.

There are plenty of tips you can follow to help you decide what to choose on a menu.

- Order sandwiches and burgers without the bread
- Order broiled food such as broiled chicken breast
- Order fresh fruit
- Never order any menu item that says "marinated"
- Avoid all breaded food

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- Don't over mixed salads like potato salad
- Use vinegar and oil as salad dressing

The gluten free child in the restaurant should be allowed to order food on the menu also. Kids have to learn that the safe version you cook at home may not necessarily be safe at the restaurant.

Choosing Based on Food Preparation

When the gluten free family eats at a restaurant, the simplest way to begin narrowing the list of possible gluten free foods is based on how the food is prepared. There are some foods you know right off the bat you can't eat. For example, all fried food should be avoided because it's probably been rolled in gluten containing flour mixtures. Another example is pasta. Pasta normally contains gluten so learning the different names of pasta (spaghetti, linguini, angel hair, rigatoni, tortellini and so on) can give you valuable clues that gluten is present. But there are other cooking terms you should learn to be the informed gluten free diner.

Following is a sample of the menu terms which should set off a gluten-alert alarm.

- Bourguignonne
- Mornay sauce
- White sauce
- Chateaubriand
- Baguette
- Petits fours
- Croissant
- Croquette
- Quiche
- Fettuccini

- Vermicelli
- Au gratin
- Beignet
- Bisque
- Crouton
- Focaccia
- Goulash
- Panini
- Stroganoff

This is not a complete list by any stretch of the imagination. But it shows how important it is to understand the words on the menu. Even inexpensive and fast food restaurants are adding a worldly mixture of exotic terms to their menus. Soup and sandwich shops serve “paninis” and “bisque” soups that are intended for the discriminating tastes, but off-limits to you!

ALCOHOLIC DRINKS

If you enjoy the occasional drink or beer at home or at social occasions, you’ll be happy to know you don’t have to become a teetotaler because you’re gluten intolerant. You will have to make some changes though in certain cases.

The bad news for beer drinkers is traditionally made beer contains gluten. Just think about the fact that it’s made with grains and you’ll understand why. The good news for beer drinkers is they make several gluten free beers in the United States. In fact, the first of the grocery store gluten free beers have made their way to the shelves. For example, Anheuser-Busch introduced Redbridge beer in December 2006. You can also find gluten free beer online, though the price can become steep with the special shipping and handling required to get it to you safely.

The bad news for beer drinkers is traditionally made beer contains gluten.

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You can also drink distilled alcohol. Anything that has been distilled does not have measurable amounts of gluten. The gluten protein is too large to make it through the distillation process (my very unscientific explanation). The ONLY caution is to make sure the mash has not been remixed with the distilled alcohol. In that case, the mash is a grain and will contain gluten.

Most distilled liquors don't contain mash. You can safely drink the following liquors, but this list is not comprehensive.

- Whiskey
- Rum
- Gin
- Brandy
- Bourbon
- Champagne
- Fruit wine
- Vodka

If you decide to drink alcohol, be aware that alcohol reduces inhibitions. So if you're having trouble saying "no thanks" to food with gluten, be careful about drinking. You will find it too hard to by-pass food you shouldn't eat – especially during a social occasion.

Just like with food, if you are not certain a bottle of alcohol is gluten free, and then verify the contents with the manufacturer. If they won't give you a definite answer, the safest thing to do is find another brand or a different liquor you know is safe to drink. When you go to parties, take your own beer or liquor too.

SAFE SNACKS

Every family eats snacks. They often eat them in the evening too. Before discovering I was gluten intolerant, I ate a lot of snacks filled with gluten. For example, I ate wheat crackers, peanut butter and crackers, wheat tortillas, cookies, and wings with barbeque

sauce. My children love my white divinity cake, while daddy can't stay away from the bags of chips.

Becoming a gluten free family made all of us reconsider what we're eating. Of course, like us, you probably already know you shouldn't be eating tons of chips and dips at night after a full dinner. You probably already know too many cookies is not good for anyone's health. But did you know you don't have to give up all your snacks just because you have become a gluten free family?

There are plenty of snacks you can eat and the only thing that will limit you is your imagination. You can make substitutions in many recipes and continue to eat some of your favorite appetizer snacks. We'll look at some recipes in another section. Of course, there's always popcorn too as long as you don't put fattening butter on it (I know, I know – what's popcorn without butter).

The best snacks to keep on hand are fresh fruits, and vegetables with gluten free dip, and nuts. Not only will these kinds of snacks keep you gluten free, they will help you maintain a healthy weight while providing important nutrients. You should really try to avoid potato chips and other greasy types of snacks loaded with salt and carbohydrates. Some chips have gluten in them too as a binder. If you do decide to eat chips, make sure you read the ingredients on the label.

The best snacks to keep on hand are fresh fruits, and vegetables with gluten free dip, and nuts.

A favorite snack for people with gluten intolerance is homemade trail mix. You can make a large bag using your favorite nuts, seeds and dried fruits and keep it on hand for those moments when you have to have a snack between meals. There are hundreds of versions of recipes for trail mix, muesli mix and homemade granola bars.

VISITING FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

There can't be a discussion about a gluten free family without including friends and neighbors. In suburban neighborhoods and apartment complexes across the country, friends and neighbors get together regularly to talk and share some time, or celebrate an event like a birthday. Not too many visits happen without food being involved. I know when friends come to my house, the first thing I do is invite them to share some food. It may be a snack, a desert, or something I made for a meal I want them to taste.

On the other hand, you will get invited to other people's houses too. There you will be faced with being invited to eat and wondering what's safe. I finally came up with my

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own solution to this problem. I carry my own snacks whenever I leave the house to visit people (and most other times too).

My close friends and neighbors know about gluten intolerance so aren't surprised when they see me pull out my own snacks from my purse or carry bag. Whoever is gluten intolerant in your house will need to be prepared the same way. If it's you, plan on carrying your own snacks so you're never left out of the food sessions. If one of your children is gluten intolerant, then you'll want to carry snacks for them of course.

You will soon find your best friends and family keeping a supply of gluten free snacks on hand just for you. If you're going to someone's house for a meal and don't know the person very well, you can do several things to pave the way for a smooth visit.

- Call the people ahead of time and explain the situation
- See if the menu has been determined and if there is anything you can eat
- Ask if they mind you unobtrusively bringing food you know will be gluten free
- Carry a secret supply of snacks just in case

Friends and neighbors are normally very understanding and cooperative. In your gluten free family, adults that are gluten intolerant have it much easier than children who have celiac disease. It's harder for children to accept they can't eat the same things their friends are eating when the mother makes a snack. For this reason, the next section is dedicated to gluten intolerant children.

4 GLUTEN FREE CHILDREN

Children are very special people. They bring great happiness to a family, and in return, you want your children to be happy. Many families have gone through very difficult times before learning one of their kids is gluten intolerant. Children, as discussed earlier, will exhibit a variety of symptoms if they have celiac disease. They may lose weight, have emotional problems, refuse to eat, not develop properly and have teeth enamel problems. But once the family learns the problem is gluten, there's a lot that can be done to help the child cope and easily transition to a gluten free life.

The first step of course is coming to grips with your own emotions. No parent wants their child to be sick, and being told a son or daughter has celiac disease can be initially shocking. After all, a disease is something that doesn't go away. When you learn about gluten intolerance, it doesn't take long to figure out that your child will have to learn how adapt in a world full of gluten.

Fortunately, if children are one thing, it's adaptable. There are many benefits for the child when the entire family begins following the gluten free lifestyle.

- Let's your son or daughter know that living gluten free is possible for anyone
- Sends the message that it's a healthy lifestyle
- Makes it easier to teach the child how to live gluten free
- Sets a positive example
- Gluten free living will be discussed regularly
- Shows how to live gluten free over the long term

Teaching your child how to cope means teaching him or her how to live a gluten free lifestyle – forever. That means learning how to handle all the food events in a child's life. These include family dinners, birthday parties, holidays and school events to name a few.

The first step for helping your child cope is to talk to him or her openly and frequently about the gluten free lifestyle.

The first step for helping your child cope is to talk to him or her openly and frequently about the gluten free lifestyle. As an adult, we have the ability to look into the future and see how what we do now will impact us 20 years from now.

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Most children don't have that ability. The key is to convey the attitude that gluten free living:

- Is very possible for anyone at any age
- Doesn't mean he or she gets left out of important occasions
- Is something he or she can learn to take responsibility for because mommy and daddy know they are smart
- It's something the whole family wants to help with because they love him or her

Of course, you want to express these sentiments and practicalities in words the youngster can understand. You also want to show the child, by example, how well everyone in the family does on a gluten free diet. The main thing is to give positive feedback. How you talk to a child often determines how well a child learns and cooperates.

There are many tips parents have shared over the years concerning ways to help kids understand how important it is to not eat gluten. What is amazing about children is how well they can understand and apply information you might think is over their head. The reality is when you don't feel good, and you learn something specific caused it, it's easy to make the connection.

The schools used to teach geometry in high school. Then they began teaching it in junior high. Now, my 8-year old nephew is learning geometric shapes and their names in the third grade! The capacity of a child's mind is far greater than science has even allowed. So children under the age of 13 can certainly learn about gluten and the fact it makes the stomach hurt.

- Don't underestimate how much your child will understand
- Let the child suggest ways to make gluten free living work
- Teach the child about different items that can contain gluten besides food
- Be positive at all times and never make the child feel as if the disease is a burden on the family
- Teach the child other words indicating gluten as the child matures

- Point out things that prove staying off gluten works; for example, a skin rash clears up
- Invite lots of comments and opinions about the gluten free foods you cook
- Establish a reward system for behavior modification purposes
- Be sensitive to your child's feelings

One of the problems your gluten intolerant child, and you, will have to deal with are relatives who mean well, but refuse to cooperate. This can be Aunt Sally or Grandma or Uncle Ed. They love your kids, but have trouble understanding why they have to say "no" all of a sudden to requests for food treats like cake or cookies. Grandmothers and grandfathers are notorious for being pushovers (in the nicest sense), and when your son or daughter gets them alone, the sky's the limit. Your kids become expert negotiators and little Donald Trumps and Oprah Winfreys.

That's a major reason why you should make sure you meet with all of your immediate family and explain what gluten intolerance is all about and what gluten does to the body. I'm sure that once everyone understands the danger of eating gluten, they will be prepared for the frontal assault by the kids. Saying "no" is a lot easier when you know why.

EQUIPPING CHILDREN TO TAKE OWNERSHIP OF THEIR HEALTH

The thought of children taking control can initially bring up images of tiny dictators that don't go to school and designate mandatory electronic game time. But in the case of the gluten intolerant child, allowing him or her to take some responsibility for the gluten free diet is a way to get the child to take responsibility.

One of the issues you might have to face in your gluten free family is the feeling brothers and sisters view the gluten intolerant child is seen as being treated "special". That may or may not create hard feelings. This potential problem is one of the major advantages of living a gluten free family lifestyle. If everyone participates, then no one is singled out all the time.

But you're still likely to experience some feelings of anxiety or

One of the issues you might have to face in your gluten free family is the feeling brothers and sisters view the gluten intolerant child is seen as being treated "special".

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resentment among other children. For one thing, the other kids may feel deprived of what they like to eat. For another thing, siblings may feel the parents spend too much time on the gluten intolerant child and not enough time on them. It may sound like a selfish attitude, but you must remember they are at a different stage of maturity than you or I.

Letting your child take control of his or her gluten free lifestyle is a major step in the right direction. This not only makes him or her less “needy” on the entire family, it establishes the right attitude from the start. The child needs to understand that living gluten free is not a one time event – it’s a way of living he or she will have to follow the rest of his or her life.

The first step is to establish a separate corner in the kitchen for the gluten intolerant child. In the designated spot will be dishes, utensils and even snacks that are gluten free. This way the child begins the process of learning how to live a gluten free lifestyle. Other ways to teach a child how to take responsibility include the following.

- Give your child plenty of opportunity to express both positive and negative feelings
- Plan meals together or at least consult with your child about what he or she would prefer to eat
- Teach your child to read food labels with you so he or she begins to understand how to find gluten in foods
- Let your child make his or her own lunch for school

The general idea, as you can see, is to allow the child to participate as much as possible in making the gluten free lifestyle a success. Participation usually leads to ownership, and that’s what you want for the long term. You want your child to take ownership of their health over the course of his or her life.

PARTIES AND CELEBRATIONS

Every child gets invited to birthday parties. You’ve done everything you can to teach your kids about the gluten free diet, but that’s little comfort the first time they go to someone else’s house for a birthday party.

The gluten free family must deal with the birthday party (or any party for that matter) dilemma. Since you're not the first parent to deal with this issue, there are plenty of ideas that have been tested and found to work.

- Call the parents of your child's friend before the party and explain the foods your child cannot eat
- Supply a written (can be email) description of the food intolerance and why your child can't eat birthday cake and sandwiches
- Have the mother give your child a gluten free desert while the other kids are eating birthday cake
- Offer to supply the gluten free food your son or daughter will eat at the party
- Take gluten free food, including ice cream and cake, to the party house ahead of time
- Make sure your child doesn't go to the party hungry

The one thing you don't want to do is scare the other parents and get your child ostracized from parties. As the parent, you should make it as easy as possible on the other parents.

Another consideration for birthday parties is the use of paints, glues and play doughs that contain gluten. You can ask the parents holding the birthday party what games will be played. If any of the games or events use supplies that might contain gluten you can supply a gluten free version ahead of time. For example, if there will be face painting at the party, you can supply homemade paints for your son or daughter to use.

Another great idea is to have a "party box". In it can be all the gluten free versions of supplies typically used at a birthday party. This includes glue, stickers, play dough, envelopes and chalk. If you've called ahead, the mother will know to look for the gluten free party box.

Kids are so adaptable; it's the parents who often have more problems transitioning the family to a gluten free lifestyle.

HOLIDAYS

When the holidays roll around, there are plenty of traditions you must convert to a gluten free version. You want your child who is gluten intolerant to have as much fun as the other kids, but some of the holidays are full of temptations to cheat.

For example, Halloween is a holiday where kids go door to door and get food placed in their bag. Some of it you know is gluten free if it has the name brand wrapper still on it. But in many cases, you have no idea who made the piece of candy or what it's made of, making it inedible for your child. It takes a lot of imagination and finesse to get your son or daughter through the holidays without feeling as if they missed out on the traditions.

The keys to successful holidays is being prepared and being creative.

Keeping your child healthy is the primary goal, but you also want your child to enjoy the normal activities. The holidays should be fun and not a time of fear while sitting on the sidelines. The keys to successful holidays is being prepared and being creative. Following are some ideas and recipes for holiday treats for kids.

Halloween

Halloween can be a scary holiday and not because of the costumes. Your gluten intolerant child wants to go door to door and collect candy and food, most of which he or she can't eat. Telling your children they're not allowed to enjoy Halloween can be almost cruel since other children will be knocking at your door. You have three choices.

- Secretly deliver gluten free candy and snacks to the houses that will be visited before Halloween night; ask parents to give your child the specially made treats
- Hold your own Halloween party and invite the kids to your house where you can serve gluten free snacks
- Take your child to one of the Halloween parties held by schools and churches for safety reasons and bring gluten free food

When you take your child to a party or have the party yourself, it's much easier to control what goodies are handed to your son or daughter. It also takes a lot of the stress out of the holiday. You can make delicious and fun gluten free Halloween treats too.

SPOOKY GLUTEN FREE CARAMEL APPLES

6 apples
2 Tablespoons water
60 Hershey's Caramels (make sure they say "classic")
6 Popsicle sticks

Directions

Put caramel and water in microwave safe bowl
Cook mixture on high in microwave for 1 minute
Stir
Keep heating for 30 seconds at a time, stirring each time, until completely mixed and smooth
Push Popsicle sticks into end of apple
Dip the in the caramel
Let dry

Recipe makes 6 apples

HALLOWEEN MIX

1 cup candy corn
1 cup M & M's
1 cup peanuts

Directions

Mix all together and place in bowls around house or use in cupcake paper holders at table for individual servings.

As you can see, holiday preparations don't have to be complicated. You can also prepare a bag of gluten free candy and food items for trading piece by piece for gluten candy your child collects going door to door.

GLUTEN FREE CHILDREN

Easter

Easter can be a difficult from the sense many people give out candy and bake special cakes just for Easter. Also, the traditional Easter basket is usually all candy. Keeping your child gluten free during the Easter holiday means knowing what candy manufacturer's vouch for their candy to be gluten free.

There are many gluten free candies on the market so filling a basket should not be difficult. You can find gluten free jelly beans and chocolate for example. You can fill plastic eggs with gluten free candy. You can also bake some Easter gluten free cupcakes to put in the basket. You can also fill the basket with other non-food items too such as toys or stuffed animals (depending on age of child).

Christmas

Christmas is such a wonderful holiday with the lights and special celebrations. It's also a time when there is lots of sweets baked. Your children will be invited to Christmas parties and there will be lots of parties at school. It can be a difficult time for kids when they are constantly bombarded with trays of brightly colored treats.

The solution is to make sure there are plenty of gluten free cookies and cakes on hand at home and at school.

The solution is to make sure there are plenty of gluten free cookies and cakes on hand at home and at school. The teacher should always have a supply of food your child can eat for every party. You should make sure the gluten free food is as attractively arranged as the food the other children are eating. You don't want the other kids enjoying a class party and eating food on a decorated table while yours eats out of paper bag.

You can call the teacher before the holidays and request a schedule of events. Discuss the best way for your son or daughter to participate. There are lots of recipes for gluten free Christmas cookies and cakes available so you won't have any problems cooking gluten free holiday food. You can also buy gluten free cookies and candies at health food stores and online.

Following are a couple of sample Christmas recipes

GLUTEN FREE SUGAR COOKIES

3 cups gluten free flour mix
2 eggs
1 teaspoon soda

1 cup sugar
1 teaspoon cream of tartar
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 cup butter

Directions

Place the soda, flour and the cream of tartar in a sifter and sift into bowl
Cut in butter until the size of small peas and then set aside
Beat eggs
Add sugar and vanilla flavoring to eggs and mix well
Mix the egg mixture and flour mixture together by hand
Chill in refrigerator 15 min and up to 3 day
Roll out floured surface
Cut cookies
Bake in oven preheated to 350 degrees for 9 minutes

Frost with gluten free frosting made by mixing 2 cups of powdered sugar with 2
tablespoon of melted butter
Sprinkle tops with green and red colored sugar

GLUTEN FREE GINGER SNAPS

1/3 cup honey
3 tablespoons vegetable oil
1/3 cup apple juice
1/2 cup amaranth flour
1/2 cup buckwheat flour (white)
1/2 cup quinoa flour
1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar
1 teaspoon ground ginger
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon salt

Directions

Combine the honey, oil and apple juice in a pan
Heat over low heat until the honey is melted
Remove and let cool a few minutes

GLUTEN FREE CHILDREN

Combine amaranth, buckwheat, quinoa flours together
To flour mixture add cream of tartar, ginger, cinnamon, baking soda and salt
Mix flour mixture and honey mixture together
Drop by rounded teaspoons on baking sheet lined with parchment paper
Bake for 12 minutes in preheated 350 degree oven

The holidays can be a lot of fun for everyone, including children that are gluten intolerant. It's all a matter of planning, which leads to an important point about gluten intolerance. Gluten intolerance is very manageable, but it does require preplanning. Food spontaneity is not possible with gluten intolerance. There are gluten free ingredient substitutions for almost every recipe for cookies, cakes, candy and meals for the holidays. You just need to do your research ahead of time to insure the holidays go as smoothly as possible.

5 GLUTEN FREE TEENS

Teenagers are a breed all their own with their raging hormones and desire to be considered an adult. During the teenage years, the body changes rapidly from a gawky child into the beginnings of the adult they are soon to be. Teenagers are not only growing rapidly, but they tend to be very emotional (parents say “dramatic”).

Teenagers like to see themselves as independent even if they really aren't. They don't like seeing themselves as still fully relying on anyone. The gluten free family with a gluten free teenager has to be very attuned to the adolescent's behavior, because you can't count on him or her to tell you what their real thoughts are about having celiac disease.

If your teenager was diagnosed earlier in life, it's hoped all the training and talking you did before they turned thirteen has taken hold. If the teenager is newly diagnosed, it can be more difficult to convince him or her to change dietary habits to fit need. Either way you might possibly find your hands full making sure your son or daughter learns to adopt the gluten free lifestyle.

Following are the kinds of issues gluten intolerant teenagers worry about in their lives.

- Teens worry about putting on weight as the body heals once gluten is eliminated from the diet
- Teen worry they will get embarrassingly sick at parties due to eating gluten by accident
- Teen worry they won't be able to enjoy the times with friends where they eat foods like pizza
- Teens don't like feeling different
- Teens don't like being forced to admit they need help adapting to a gluten free lifestyle
- Teens are often not good at handling stress because of increased hormone levels, the trials of high school and the rapidly changing body
- Teens are prone to emotional problems such as depression and eating disorders

GLUTEN FREE TEENS

In the family, parents must pay close attention to the behavior of gluten intolerant teenagers. Teenagers will separate themselves emotionally from the family which explains why so many parents are surprised when they find out their son or daughter's true feelings. It's also why teenagers will develop eating disorders.

Teenagers are very image conscious. They worry about their bodies and their looks as everyone knows. Despite seeing themselves as independent, they actually don't like appearing to be different from other kids in school. Teenagers will use food as a means of emotional expression.

It's no secret that bulimia and anorexia have become serious eating disorders for teenagers.

It's no secret that bulimia and anorexia have become serious eating disorders for teenagers. Seen as a way to lose weight rapidly, teenagers will eat normal meals and then purge the food, or won't eat enough to stay healthy. When dealing with gluten intolerance, food becomes the enemy again as they struggle to maintain their weight while growing into adulthood.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES TEENS FACE

There are lots of reasons why teenagers will cheat on their gluten free diet. It's important the family embrace the gluten free lifestyle when the teenager is diagnosed with gluten intolerance as it is when a child is diagnosed. Keeping the lines of communication open may not be an easy goal, but it's a really important one. A teenager diagnosed with gluten intolerance must understand the effects of gluten on the body.

This is the real key to getting through to an adolescent. They worry about their bodies (consider all the hours in front of the mirror). So explaining how the body is being damaged when gluten is ingested should encourage cooperation. Yet there will be plenty of opportunities to cheat and it's going to be hard on the teen to resist.

- Teenagers always worry about what their friends are thinking about them
- Teenagers will be tempted to eat the same foods their friends are eating
- Teenagers don't like admitting they have a health issue
- Teenagers attend lots of social events with tempting foods

- Teenagers like to prove they can do whatever they want (even though they can't) so eat gluten food just because you told them not to

It's a fact that the teenage years are when gluten free diets are often broken for all the reasons listed above. Teens do things that make no sense and using gluten to control weight is one of them. But it's important that parents not get discouraged and give up working with the teenager.

Adolescents may not be aware they are in the company of thousands of other teenagers with the same disease. The first step to breaking feelings of isolation is to prove they're not alone. Keeping lots of gluten free snacks in the house is a good idea. They should be added to the backpack so the student never goes hungry.

Like children, teenagers must learn to take control of their gluten free lifestyle. As a parent, you won't be at the party where food is laid out buffet style. You can't be in the school hallways telling your son or daughter the food in the vending machine is unsafe.

But you can be there to talk to your son and daughter every day about their eating habits. You can also show lots of love and support, and give him or her plenty of opportunity to tell you what's going through their mind.

- Include your teen in meal planning whenever possible
- Encourage your teenage son or daughter to invite friends to the house after school and have gluten free snacks prepared
- Watch carefully for signs of drastic weight change
- Meet with the school dietician and your adolescent family member to discuss gluten intolerance
- Provide plenty of literature on the damaging effects of gluten the teen can read in private

There's no one piece of advice that will insure your son or daughter pays attention and lives gluten free. All the tips together, if applied consistently and relentlessly, will hopefully result in a well-adjusted and gluten free teenager.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES FOR YOUNG ADULTS

It's easy to forget that teenagers include college students. When college students go away to school, and don't live at home, maintaining the gluten free lifestyle becomes primarily their responsibility.

- Parents can send gluten free snacks to college students so they are sure to have good tasting treats. This helps your son or daughter adhere to the gluten free lifestyle.
- Students should make sure they always have a gluten free snack in their purse or car.
- College students should discuss the food serviced in the cafeteria or on-campus food service areas with the dietician. Students can learn which menu items are safe to eat.
- College students should join a local support group
- Students should research restaurants near campus just like mom and dad did in the neighborhood area
- College students should never try to cope alone when needing help. Campuses have counselors that provide valuable assistance.
- College students can order gluten free foods from online stores.

The gluten free family can be made up of a diverse group of people of all ages. Keeping the family healthy is the ultimate goal of any dietary plan and that includes the gluten free diet. Meal planning is a major component that assists with shopping, budgetary considerations, and of course, insuring balanced meals are provided in an interesting and varied manner.

6 MEAL PLANNING

BREAKFAST

There's nothing like eating breakfast to start the day right. It's the meal of the day that kick starts your metabolism, but only if you eat the right foods. Too many people get up in the morning, dash about getting ready to leave the house, and skip breakfast in the process. Even if they eat breakfast, it ends up being foods high in sugar and carbohydrates like donuts, sweetened cereal or bagels.

As we discussed, eating the right kinds of foods is important for a person with gluten intolerance. That truth applies no matter what meal we're talking about. So breakfast should be the first meal of the day that accomplishes the following.

- Restores the energy levels depleted after going 8 or more hours since the last meal
- Revs up the metabolism to assist with weight control
- Provides a balance of nutrients that make a significant contribution to the day's nutritional requirements

You can't eat glazed donuts for breakfast, but you can plan to eat a variety of healthy foods that keep you interested in the meal. You shouldn't eat too many carbohydrates at breakfast every day either, because you'll use up your carbohydrate recommended limits after the first one or two meals of the day and be tempted to overeat at dinner. You also should not eat the same foods every morning, because those donuts will start calling your name loudly. You don't want to start your whole day by cheating on your gluten free diet.

If it sounds like there are a lot of "shoulds", don't be discouraged. There are lots of foods you can eat for breakfast that are wholesome and interesting. When you plan breakfast meals, choose a variety of menu items that are prepared or easy to make.

- Gluten free breakfast bars
- Gluten free muffins

MEAL PLANNING

- Gluten free cereals such as rice crispies or corn flakes
- Fresh fruit
- Fruit smoothies
- Gluten free waffles
- Gluten free bagel and cream cheese
- Breakfast burrito
- Hard boiled eggs and gluten free toast
- Quiche

One of my favorite meals for breakfast is the breakfast burrito. I use corn tortillas that are filling and easy to store. Everyone in our gluten free family enjoys this breakfast because it's filling and tasty, making a great start to the day.

GLUTEN FREE BREAKFAST BURRITO

This recipe is for a single burrito, but you can multiply the quantity based on the number of people. For young children, you can make one tortilla and cut it in half.

1 egg per
¼ cup cheddar cheese
1 corn tortilla
Salsa (keep it very mild for younger kids)

Directions

Scramble the egg
Pour into skillet
When the egg starts to harden in the skillet, add the cheese
Warm tortilla in oven
When the egg is cooked, place egg and cheese mixture on tortilla
Cover with salsa

The great thing about this recipe is you can add other ingredients if you want such as peppers, onions or mushrooms. I also make some ahead for the week and keep them in the refrigerator for those “gotta-run” days.

For those days you have more time to cook breakfast, gluten free pancakes are a great start to the day.

GREAT START GLUTEN FREE PANCAKES

1 cup buttermilk
2 eggs
1 tablespoons vegetable oil
2 tablespoons brown sugar
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 cup rice flour
1/2 cup potato flour
1/4 cup corn meal
Pinch salt

Directions

Place milk, eggs and oil in blender and blend at a low speed until well mixed
Pour into a large bowl
Add the sugar and all the dry ingredients
Mix well
Pour 6-inch rounds into non-stick skillet
Flip when bubbles appear throughout and the edge of pancake are cooked

You can top these delicious pancakes with gluten free syrup and fruit. Everyone in your family will enjoy these pancakes and never know they’re gluten free.

Breakfast can be a quick meal or a sit-down morning affair, but it should always be a nutritious gluten free meal.

LUNCH

Lunch can be as varied as you want it to be. You can eat gluten free versions of almost anything you enjoy eating. You want to eat enough to keep your metabolism at the right level without overeating. The key to a

The key to a healthy gluten free lunch is to avoid processed and canned foods.

MEAL PLANNING

healthy gluten free lunch is to avoid processed and canned foods. Most canned meats, for example, contain gluten. You want to eat fresh foods as much as possible or buy gluten free processed food.

- Soups
- Salads
- Sandwiches
- Stews
- Fruit and vegetables
- Corn chips with cheese and salsa

Salads are very popular in a gluten free family lifestyle. They are easy to make and you can customize them to taste after starting with the basic salad mix. There's a large variety of salad to choose from and they are all delicious. For example, you can make a Caesar salad, tossed salad, chicken salad, tuna salad or a spinach salad.

If you work, salads are easy to tote in an air tight container and you don't have to worry about croutons sneaking into your lunch.

GLUTEN FREE CHEF SALAD TO GO

Salad blend of choice
1 hardboiled egg
Cut-up turkey or chicken
Gluten free salad dressing
Tortilla chips

You can carry other vegetables in separate containers if desired, to be added to the salad when ready to eat. For example, cut up tomatoes make a nice addition and cheese can be added at lunchtime.

Place the turkey or chicken, and egg, on top of the salad greens in an air tight carry container. When ready to eat, add the remaining ingredients you brought to work, top with salad dressing and enjoy with your tortilla chips.

Most people want quick and easy lunches. You can spend a lot of time cooking fancier meals if you want, but they are more like dinner recipes. Here's just a short list of simple lunch ideas you can eat at home or at work.

- Spread cream cheese on ham slice and roll up in soft corn tortilla
- Tortilla chips covered with cheese dip and topped with onions and tomatoes
- Leftover roast beef topped with seasonings and placed on gluten free toast
- Loaded baked potato; load with gluten free chili, vegetables like cooked broccoli and cauliflower or bacon and cheese
- Precooked pasta salads
- Yogurt and fruit
- Egg salad on gluten free bread

The list could go on and on, but the main point for planning lunches for gluten free living is to eat a variety of foods. As discussed earlier, you don't want to get bored with your meals, because that makes it too tempting to cheat.

DINNER

Many times, by dinner time, everyone in the family have turned into ravenous beasts. Normally sweet children and considerate spouses are begging for dinner. Dinner meals can range for pre-cooked meals to elaborate affairs with several courses. Most of the time, you just want a filling gluten free dinner that is tasty and easy to make.

Following are some ideas for meal planning for your gluten free family that are simple and don't require a lot of ingredients.

- Pizza (yes! You're favorite pizza)
- Beef stew
- Roasted chicken

MEAL PLANNING

- Red beans and rice with sausage
- Gluten free spaghetti dinners
- Broiled fish
- Gluten free pasta dinner
- Mexican corn tortilla dinners
- Chicken fajitas
- Crock-pot dinners

Gluten free dinner planning can include any kind of meal, but is made with ingredient substitutions. You can plan for dinners by incorporating two concepts.

- Buy some ingredients or foods already made
 - Pasta
 - Bread
 - One skillet meals
 - Chili with beans
 - Sauces
 - Noodle dinners
 - Pre-made pizza crusts
- Assemble some foods yourself

For example, you can buy gluten free pizza crusts but make the sauce yourself and choose your own pizza toppings. Or you can begin with a pre-packaged one skillet meal and add ingredients or side items to round the dinner out. Your family will be surprised they can't tell the family has gone gluten free. The one who knows is the cook!

Following are a few recipes to get you started on your gluten free dinners.

GLUTEN FREE SWEET AND SOUR CHICKEN

2 cups of diced cooked skinless chicken breasts
2 diced cooked carrots
4 chopped celery stalks

1 chopped medium onion
1 crushed garlic clove
1 teaspoon grated ginger
1 teaspoon olive oil

Sweet and sour sauce:

1 cup sugar free pineapple pieces
1 tablespoon brown sugar
1 tablespoon vinegar
dash gluten free soy sauce
1 tablespoon corn flour
1/2 cup water

To make sweet and sour sauce, just add the ingredients together.

Directions

Heat oil in non-stick fry pan
Cook onion, garlic and ginger for 3 to 5 minutes
Add celery and stir with onion mixture
Add sweet and sour sauce to vegetables.
Heat over a medium heat and keep stirring until thickened
Add carrots and chicken

You can serve this recipe over cooked rice, add a salad and it's a quick and easy meal that's nutritious.

BLACK BEAN BURGERS

This recipe is for those times you just have to have a burger, but don't want to eat meat. In addition, beans are a great source of protein which is important for the gluten free diet.

3 pounds black beans that are cooked and drained
¼ cup onion – diced
½ cup diced red or green bell pepper
1 teaspoon cumin
¼ cup egg substitute or 1 beaten egg
1 cup quinoa – cooked
2 tablespoons olive oil (will use one at a time)

MEAL PLANNING

Lettuce and toppings

Directions

Mix all the ingredients except oil and the lettuce. Make sure the ingredients are mixed well and then form hamburger patties. Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in the skillet for each batch of burgers. Cook patties until heated through.

You can serve the burgers on lettuce topped with tomatoes and cheese. Or you can buy gluten free hamburger buns and enjoy a “real” old-fashioned hamburger. This is a very healthy meal the entire family will enjoy.

GLUTEN FREE SPAGHETTI DINNER

This dinner proves you don’t have to do everything from scratch in order to enjoy your favorite foods in the gluten free version. When you need a quick dinner that’s delicious and filling, spaghetti is hard to beat.

1 box gluten free spaghetti pasta
1 jar gluten free spaghetti sauce
Garlic powder
Basil

You make this dinner just like you did before you were on a gluten free diet. Just cook the pasta according to the directions on the box.

Heat the spaghetti sauce and add any seasonings you desire such as garlic powder and basil.

Pour the sauce over the spaghetti.

You can make your own meatballs ahead of time and freeze them for later use in quick dinner meals like this one. Add a salad and gluten free garlic bread and you have dinner on the table quickly.

DESSERTS

A gluten free lifestyle includes dessert just like a gluten filled diet. You don’t have to deprive your family of sweets just because one or more members are gluten intolerant. What would life be like without dessert?

Of course, dessert can be healthy too. I love to slice strawberries, add some sweet blueberries and cover with a sweet gluten free glaze. It's very sweet, but I also get a healthy serving of fruit. But sometimes a fruit dessert just won't do the job of satisfying the desire for dessert. That's when you have to call in the recipe reinforcements and enjoy a true gluten free confection.

By the way, most ice creams are gluten free as long as you avoid those with cake and cookies added. You can also eat gelatin and pudding.

GLUTEN FREE PEANUT BUTTER FUDGE

18 ounces peanut butter chips
14 ounce can of sweetened condensed milk
2 teaspoons vanilla
Pinch of salt

Directions

Place the condensed milk and peanut butter chips in a glass bowl.
Microwave for 3 minutes (don't let it bubble up and out of the bowl)
Stir to finish melting chips
Add vanilla and salt and mix again
Line a 10 inch pan with wax paper
Pour the fudge into the pan and refrigerate for at least 2 hours

No one will ever know this fudge was so easy to make, because it tastes like expensive fudge you buy at a candy counter.

GLUTEN FREE CAROB CAKE

½ cup vegetable shortening (or can be butter)
1 cup sugar
2 eggs
1 ½ cups corn flour mix
1 cup milk
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 cup carob powder

MEAL PLANNING

Directions

Cream the shortening

Slowly add the sugar while continuing to cream the mixture until it's light

Add one egg at a time and keep beating

Alternate adding corn flour mix and milk

Make sure mixture is well mixed

Add vanilla and carob powder

Finish mixing

Bake in 2 8-inch pans that have been sprayed with nonstick spray

Bake at 450 degree for 30 to 40 minutes

Frost after cooled

MEAL PLANNING SUMMARY

Meal planning for the gluten free family lifestyle takes some effort, but once you learn your way around the gluten free world, it really doesn't take much more effort than cooking with gluten ingredients. The extra effort required results from the following.

- Identifying suitable gluten free ingredient substitutions for favorite family recipes
- Identifying those gluten free products you like to use regularly
- Additional preparation of meals from scratch

If you were attempting to live gluten free 20 years ago, it would have been much more difficult. Today, there are online stores and a rapidly expanding choice of gluten free foods online. So now you can sit down and plan your meals knowing you can make gluten free versions.

Remember that gluten free variety is the key to the gluten free spice of life!

Finding recipes is a breeze too. The online world supplies a constant flow of recipes that are being tested in kitchens across the country. You shouldn't be afraid to try new recipes. Remember that gluten free variety is the key to the gluten free spice of life!

When you are planning your meals, keep the following tips in mind.

- Try to plan a week of meals at a time

- Prepare foods you can freeze for emergency meals
- Cook extra batches of ingredients you can use in multiple recipes
- Use your crock-pot for easy whole meals
- Let the children help in the kitchen to encourage cooperation and understanding of the gluten free life; this means making some foods the kids can help assemble

Once you have planned your meals, it's time to begin shopping for the gluten free family.

7 GLUTEN FREE SHOPPING

ONLINE OR IN-STORE?

You have a choice of places to shop today. That wasn't always true before health food stores and the internet became popular. Now you can choose from several different sources to find your gluten free foods and ingredients. I shop from a variety of sources to insure I'm getting the best price and variety for my family.

The most natural place to begin shopping is at the local grocery store. You need to do your ingredient homework before you start as discussed in a separate book (Beginner's Guide to Gluten Free Living). By contacting manufacturer's and researching product ingredients online, you'll know which products at the grocery store are gluten free.

Fortunately, the labeling laws are making products made now easier to identify. But

The best approach to gluten free shopping is buying foods in their natural state as much as possible.

there are still plenty of items on the grocery store shelves made before the labeling laws were passed. So you have to read labels.

The best approach to gluten free shopping is buying foods in their natural state as much as possible. You can buy all the fresh vegetables, fruits and green salad mixes you want without worrying about gluten exposure. You can also purchase chicken, fish and meat with no additives. Additives include flavoring injections commonly found in turkeys.

You should only shop with a list in your hand created from your meal planning exercise. You won't be able to find everything you want though at the grocery store. That means you must shop several places in order to get all the ingredients you need.

- Grocery stores are convenient and tend to be cheaper than online stores
- Health food stores often sell gluten free products
- Gluten free online stores are multiplying exponentially on the internet as the number of identified people who are gluten intolerant grows
- Specialized markets including ethnic markets can be good sources of gluten free food products

The good news is that shopping for gluten free ingredients and foods gets easier and easier the more you do it. Just don't limit yourself to the traditional grocery store, because mainstream stores are just now starting to carry a variety of gluten free products. You want to be careful you don't slip into cooking uninspired meals simply because you can't find the ingredients you need.

MAKING A LIST

You should always make and keep lists for gluten free shopping and stocking needs. One of the keys to sticking with a gluten free lifestyle is being prepared. You want to insure you have the ingredients on hand you need when ready to cook. This prevents the temptation to cheat on the gluten free lifestyle.

Lists serve several purposes:

- Saves time while shopping
- Insures you don't run out of critical ingredients
- Enables you to cook the items on your meal plan
- Discourages impulse buying
- Saves money

Getting in the habit of making lists may require some practice at first, but eventually you'll depend on your grocery lists to keep on track. Lists are particularly useful when you shop more than one place too. You can shop at the local grocery store, mark off the items you purchase, and then use the remaining list to shop online.

SHOPPING STRATEGIES

Practice makes perfect, but if you are in the process of transitioning to a gluten free lifestyle, you might like some suggestions from the pros. It can be a little daunting at first to attempt grocery shopping with such an important restriction on what you can buy. The natural concern is for accidentally buying, and then eating, gluten food products.

GLUTEN FREE SHOPPING

There have been lots of good tips offered by experienced shoppers. Finding gluten free products is much easier when you know what to look for at the store.

- As mentioned, purchase fresh foods
- Look for the health food section or aisle
- Check labels against your list of “words that mean gluten” until you are comfortable with the terminology
- Ask the manager about gluten free products carried in the store
- Get advice from your local support group about best places to shop

Shopping for gluten free products can become as natural to you as shopping has always been. Because of your meal planning, you know what you want so you are now a shopper with a plan.

COST CONTROL

You will probably see an increase in your grocery bill when you start shopping for gluten free foods. Fresh food often costs more than canned food. But over time you'll learn different ways to keep the costs from spiraling out of control.

- Avoid overspending on specialty foods
- Always use your shopping lists
- Comparison shop for gluten free items just like you would for other items
- Buy in larger quantities when possible to reduce the per unit costs
- Shop a variety of online gluten free stores for specials

It's easy to see that you need to use the same common sense techniques for keeping your grocery bill reasonable as you have always used.

8 MEAL PLANNING FOR CHILDREN

No discussion about the gluten free family would be complete without reviewing the meal planning needs for different age groups of children. Obviously, each age group has a different lifestyle and different health and social needs. Accommodating those needs in meal planning means being familiar with the choices available.

When you are trying to help your family live gluten free, you shouldn't get bogged down in following recipes perfectly. At first, being gluten intolerant can seem overwhelming, but it doesn't take too long to learn the most important part of any recipe is the choice of ingredients – they must all be gluten free. Beyond that you're free to experiment.

When you are trying to help your family live gluten free, you shouldn't get bogged down in following recipes perfectly.

Don't let fear stifle your creativity. You can take other people's recipes and amend them or you can invent your own. When the kids ask for something you don't have, like granola trail mix, learn to make your own gluten free version. If your husband says he really misses your chicken pasta dish, then by all means, make it using the gluten free pasta. The only way to learn which ingredient substitutions will work for you is through experimentation.

INFANTS TO TODDLERS

Menu planning for infants to toddlers includes teaching kids how to enjoy healthy foods and not just junk food. You should limit the amount of sugar and carbohydrates you feed children just as much as you do for adults. The obesity rate in the United States is growing at an alarming rate and it includes even young children.

When young children are diagnosed as gluten intolerant, the only diet they know is one without gluten. Your meal planning though should include foods that let the child know they have an intolerance, but are "normal" in every way. So you do want to cook the gluten free birthday cake to eat at their friend's birthday party.

SCHOOL AGE LUNCHES

One of the biggest issues with school age children is what to put in their gluten free lunch. Meal planning for school lunches can be challenging, but once again, with practice it gets easier. Lunches can include items like:

- Eggs
- Cheese
- Yogurt
- Sandwiches made with gluten free bread
- Gluten free muffins
- Fresh fruit cups
- Gluten free cookies
- Trail mix
- Energy bars
- Rice or corn cereal snacks

One of the most worrisome issues with school age children is their propensity to trade lunches they don't like. So it's important to talk to your gluten intolerant child and

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find out what they like and don't like about lunch. Your child must be constantly reminded they cannot eat gluten which means no lunch sharing and no buying food out of the vending machine. You just have to make sure your son or daughter always has plenty of gluten free food handy.

TEENAGERS AND FOOD

Everyone knows teenagers like certain foods such as pizza. When you tell them they can no longer eat pizza, wings, deli sandwiches and donuts, it can be traumatic. These are the kinds of food found at teenage parties and on school lunch lines (though schools are getting better at serving healthier meals).

One good suggestion is to have your teen invite friends over to your house and have gluten free foods available for them to eat. This enables your son or daughter to enjoy the same camaraderie of a pizza party other teens experience. It also gives teen friends an opportunity to learn about gluten intolerance and to taste gluten free food.

So when you're doing meal planning, you should try to include what I call teen-specific foods in the gluten free version. This includes items like pizza and gluten free wings, but also gluten free snacks he or she can carry with them at all times. That way, when he or she gets hungry, gluten free food is never far away.

COLLEGE AGE

You always hope that by the time your child goes to college they have learned important life lessons. At college they face many gluten challenges, because many college students like to eat pizza and drink beer (might as well be honest about the situation). You can still help your college age child eat gluten free foods thanks to the internet.

When you are meal planning, include gluten free snacks for your college kids. Online stores can even drop-ship food right at the dorm. This way you are more confident your college age child is transitioning the right way.

Your meal planning can also include ingredients for making snacks at home you then mail to the dorm.

There's a lot to think about when it comes to gluten free meal planning, but it pays off in good health every time!

9 GLUTEN FREE TRAVELLING

A book about the gluten free family would not be complete without discussing traveling. Most families travel at least once a year and often much more than that. They visit relatives, go on vacation and go camping with frequency. Understanding how to plan ahead for the trip makes the event safer and smoother.

When you are first diagnosed with gluten intolerance, the normal reaction is to stay close to your gluten free home. But eventually you'll want to expand your horizons again. When you're meal planning and food shopping, take into consideration trips you may have planned. Buying gluten free foods you can eat while traveling makes the trip much nicer. You also won't find yourself stuck without food, because you can't find a restaurant in a small town that serves anything gluten free.

- Research chain restaurants commonly found coast to coast and learn which of their menu items are gluten free
- In restaurants, substitute a salad for French fries
- Buy gluten free snacks for the car
- Purchase or make a loaf of gluten free bread you can take with you on longer trips
- Buy fresh fruit at farmer's market stands you see along the way
- Pack a "gluten free" box with your favorite sauces, dips, condiments
- Learn easy camping meals such as hunter's stew cooked in foil packets in an open fire
- Keep your food needs simple while traveling
- When possible, research the specific area you are traveling to
- Stay in hotels with microwaves or small kitchens and you can cook some of your own food (last resort on a vacation in my opinion)

There are lots of gluten free snacks you can safely carry with you. They include cereal, cookies, crackers, trail mix, dried fruit and granola. If you have a cooler the options are even greater including fresh vegetables, cheese and even pudding for dessert.

Being a gluten intolerant family doesn't mean giving up everything you love! It means adjusting your current lifestyle so you don't eat gluten. In the end, your efforts to plan and shop wisely will be well rewarded by having a healthy and happy family.

10 CONCLUSION

It's easy to fall into the trap of focusing on the negative side of being gluten intolerant. You'll notice there has not been much discussion about depression or fear or refusal to change your lifestyle. Even children understand they don't want to eat something that makes them sick, so transitioning to a gluten free lifestyle should be happily embraced (once the initial shock passes).

In this book we've discussed a lot of issues related to becoming, and staying, a gluten free family. There have been many practical tips provided to make meal planning and shopping easier. There's been a thorough discussion about the differences between age groups. Throughout the entire book has been the understanding that the right attitude makes all the difference between success and failure.

Many of the issues a gluten free family faces are related to children. It's one thing for an adult to be told they are gluten intolerant, but it's a whole other thing to tell a child. Fortunately, the younger you learn about gluten intolerance, the better control you have over symptoms through dietary control. Food is the culprit, but it's also the hero. Eat the right foods and your body won't get sick.

Children can learn at a very young age what it means to choose foods based on a food restriction. Parents hold the power to teach children to accept their gluten free lifestyle

Your health or the health of a family member depends on the family pulling together to assist each other.

with good graces and in a cooperative manner. Many times eliminating the gluten even corrects frustrating behavioral problems.

Together as a family you can live a gluten free lifestyle. Take the advice of the experts and those who have already managed the transition stage.

Your health or the health of a family member depends on the family pulling together to assist each other. Even those members without a gluten intolerance will benefit from a gluten free lifestyle.

The good news is everyone wins living a gluten free lifestyle.