

Celiac Disease - Teachers' Info

What is Celiac Disease?

Celiac disease (CD) is a permanent intolerance to gluten, a protein found in various wheats (e.g., durum, kamut, spelt), rye, barley and triticale. Gluten consumption causes damage to the absorptive surface of the small intestine and can result in malnutrition, anemia, nutritional deficiencies and an increased risk of other diseases including osteoporosis and specific cancers of the gut.

Dermatitis herpetiformis (DH) is celiac disease of the skin and is characterized by blistering, intensely itchy skin. The rash has a symmetrical distribution and is most frequently found on elbows, knees, buttocks, back of the neck, scalp and upper back. People with dermatitis herpetiformis can have gastrointestinal damage without obvious symptoms.

Symptoms

The child with celiac disease may feel miserable and depressed before diagnosis has been made or following ingestion of food containing gluten. Symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, irritability or a combination of these may appear after gluten ingestion. Some children with celiac disease will have no symptoms with gluten ingestion, however, even traces of gluten will damage the small intestine of all children with celiac disease.

Treatment

The only treatment for celiac disease is a strict gluten-free diet for life. A strict gluten-free diet will enable recovery of the gut, and may reduce the risk of developing other associated diseases and complications. Because of the complexity of the gluten-free diet, patients should be referred to a registered dietitian with expertise

in celiac disease for nutrition assessment, education and follow-up. Regular follow-up with their physician is also recommended. All people with celiac disease are encouraged to join their local chapter of the Canadian Celiac Association (CCA) for valuable practical information and ongoing support.

The safety of oats in celiac disease has been extensively investigated. Clinical studies have shown that small amounts of pure, uncontaminated oats are safe for most adults and children with celiac disease. The availability of pure oats remains a problem. Most commercially available oats are contaminated with wheat or barley. However, individuals with celiac disease must ensure that the oats they are eating are free from gluten contamination.





The Student With Celiac Disease Needs Your Support And Understanding

Children with celiac disease can and should lead a normal and happy life while following a gluten-free diet. If gluten has been accidentally ingested, they may show behavioural changes. If you are unsure of anything, please consult with the child's parents.

Getting the Diagnosis In The Classroom

Teachers can help the child with celiac disease in the following ways:

- Arrange a meeting with the child's parents to become more familiar with celiac disease.
- Encourage the parent to notify the principal and any other appropriate support personnel that there is a child with celiac disease in their school.
- Bring any unusual behaviour, fatigue or learning problems to the attention of the parents immediately.
- Establish a special signal so that the child may be excused to go to the washroom promptly should the need arise.
- Understand that any ingestion of gluten may make the child with celiac disease unwell.
- Have the parent prepare gluten-free snacks and/or treats so that when there is a party or an unexpected event, the child will have a special gluten-free treat and will not feel "left out". This can be kept in a special spot in the classroom.
- Whenever possible, send a note or telephone the parents, to notify them of an upcoming party or event. Keep the communication lines open.

- Do not allow the sharing of food.
- Learn more about celiac disease and the gluten-free diet. The Canadian Celiac Association has several good resources available. Check out our website at www.celiac.ca or contact the CCA office.
- Teachers are encouraged to educate students that some of their classmates have special dietary needs.
- Help the child to have a positive attitude about celiac disease. They should be happy and healthy as long as they follow their gluten-free diet. Individuals with celiac disease in Canada are served by local chapters across the country, which united to form a national body called the Canadian Celiac Association. This Association is a registered charity incorporated under the Canada Corporations Act.

Our Aims

The Canadian Celiac Association (CCA), the national voice for people adversely affected by gluten, is a trusted source for science-based information compassionately delivered.



www.celiac.ca