

Celiac Disease

Celiac disease is due to an intolerance to gluten, a protein found in wheat, barley and rye. Some individuals develop an immune reaction to gluten, causing damage to the lining of the small intestine and resulting in malabsorption. Patients can suffer from crampy abdominal pain, foul-smelling stools, diarrhea, weight loss, irritability, and a continuous feeling of being sick.

The diagnosis of Celiac Disease has been made easier in the last few years due to an improved blood test that can detect a variety of antibodies to gluten. A biopsy of the small intestine is the most accurate way to make the diagnosis. If the intestinal lining turns out to be damaged, your child will be placed on a gluten-free diet. You will need to carefully check the labels of any foods you purchase, since wheat flour is a hidden ingredient in many items. Because rice and rice products do not contain gluten, they'll probably become a major part of your child's diet.

Your child may not be able to tolerate milk sugar for as long as several months after the initial diagnosis is made. In this case, you may be advised to eliminate milk temporarily, as well as gluten products, from her diet. During this time she might be given milk treated with enzymes (i.e. Lactaid), so that it will be predigested before reaching the intestine. Extra vitamins and minerals also might be necessary.

If your child does have celiac disease, she must remain on a gluten-free diet for her entire life, completely avoiding wheat, rye, barley, and, in some cases, oat products.

Fortunately for affected individuals, there are more local resources than ever for gluten free foods. In addition to many items stocked at Whole Foods, Trader Joes, and local supermarket shelves, the following eateries have a variety of gluten free options:

Sugar and Olives

21 ½ Lois Street, Norwalk
203-454-3663

The Stand

31 Wall Street, Norwalk
203-956-5670

Amore Bakery

1215 Post Road, Fairfield
203-292-8475

Catch A Healthy Habit

39 Unquowa Road, Fairfield
203-292-8190

Health In A Hurry

1891 Post Road, Westport
203-254-5777

Organic Market

285 Post Road, Westport
203-227-9007

The National Foundation for Celiac Awareness

<http://www.celiaccentral.org/>

Visit this useful website for a list of processed foods that are gluten-free:

<http://www.liveglutenfreely.com/>

For more information about Celiac Disease, visit this website:

<http://www.celiac.org/>

Visit here for a great article on simple, healthy and celiac friendly convenience foods:

<http://www.todaysdietitian.com/newarchives/100610p52.shtml>

The American Dietetic Association also has good resources:

<http://www.eatright.org/Public/content.aspx?id=5542>