

Dear Teacher,

My child \_\_\_\_\_, has been diagnosed with a digestive disorder called Celiac disease. Celiac disease is an autoimmune disease triggered by consumption of, or exposure to gluten. People who have celiac disease cannot tolerate gluten, a protein found in wheat, rye, barley and contaminated oats. Gluten is found mainly in foods but may also be found in everyday products such as medicines, vitamins, lip balms, school supplies and play dough. Exposure to gluten triggers an immune reaction in my child's small intestine, which damages the surface of his/her small intestine, causing an inability to absorb certain essential nutrients and make him/her more susceptible to other medical conditions.

Celiac disease is often referred to as the "Great Pretender" because it often presents with such a wide range of symptoms. Some of the general complaints can be as simple as intermittent diarrhea/constipation, abdominal pain, bloating, and gas. It may also present itself in less obvious ways, including: Irritability or depression, anemia, joint pain, muscle cramps, skin rash, mouth sores, dental and bone disorders (osteoporosis), tingling in the legs and feet (neuropathy), weight loss, lactose intolerance, fatigue, frequent headaches, anemia, and stunted growth in children (failure to thrive).

Although celiac disease is common, it affects an average of one out of every 133 Americans, the exact cause is unknown. Celiac disease is a genetic disorder that is twice as common as Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis & cystic fibrosis combined. There is no cure for celiac disease. The only treatment for my child and others like him/her is to follow a strict gluten free diet.

As my child's teacher, you play a very important role in my child's "treatment". Although the ultimate responsibility for what my child eats or touches while at school is his/her own, it is important that you know the consequences of the exposure. Below is a list of ways you can help to ensure my child's safety in your classroom: I will provide all of my child's snacks and special party treats, so please supply me with a list of important dates. I ask that my child be the only one to touch his/her food so that cross-contamination does not occur. Please refrain from placing items such as play dough or anything containing gluten on my child's desk. I will also provide a pencil box or container for my child's school supplies and ask that they not be shared. If my child does come into contact with gluten, I ask that he/she be allowed to wash up immediately and be given extra restroom privileges if necessary. It would also be helpful for my child to wipe off his/her desk every morning with Clorox-type wipes to prevent accidental cross-contamination. I will be happy to supply the wipes for the classroom so please let me know when the supply runs low.

Although dealing with this disease seems pretty routine to my child, I realize that all of these measures require some extra effort and communication on your part. I believe that if we work together, my child can have a healthy and successful school year.

Thank you so much for your help and please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



