

Dear School Nurse,

This book is being offered to you as a donation from _____.
On behalf of your current and future students who may require a gluten free diet (or any special diet), I would like to thank you for accepting this book as a resource. You are the one who knows which students require special diets and can then share this book with their teachers and classrooms in order to help increase empathy – and more importantly – understanding. Unless actually diagnosed with celiac and living a gluten free life, most don't realize how strict this diet is. But crumbs *do* make a difference.

While we are seeing an increase in children (and adults) with diagnosed celiac, many more remain undiagnosed. As the most common genetic disorder, celiac affects nearly 1% of us, yet over 95% are still suffering symptoms needlessly. I was “that child” who came to your office over and over with stomachaches, yet was always told “nothing is wrong.” It is crucial that medical professionals understand that the “classic” celiac symptoms of diarrhea and stomachaches are not the only red flags. Many (many) don't experience digestive issues at all. There is a list of possible symptoms a mile long. Stunted growth, dental problems, anemia, and fatigue are just a few. And just as long is the list of related diseases. Studies have found, for example, that anyone with Type 1 Diabetes or Down's syndrome should be screened for celiac. And the longer a person with celiac remains undiagnosed, the more likely other auto immune diseases will develop. With an understanding of the disease and the symptoms, you can then offer parents of symptomatic children information about celiac, possibly direct them towards testing, and thus make an incredible difference in their lives. (“Just try the diet to see if it helps” is something some incorrectly suggest. Once gluten free, antibodies are no longer present for proper testing. Therefore, it is vital that serologic testing be the first step. A single negative test, however, does not rule out gluten intolerance or a diagnosis of celiac later in life.)

Here is a link to a series of short videos that offers information about celiac symptoms, testing, and the gluten free diet. www.harriswholehealth.com/gfvideos. These videos were coordinated by Cheryl Harris, a registered dietitian and nutritionist, and are presented by healthcare professionals who not only know celiac, but are able to educate the viewer in an easy to understand manner.

Other resources:

The University of Chicago Celiac Disease Center, <http://www.celiacdisease.net/> (which states on their home page: “A child will visit on average 8 pediatricians before being diagnosed”.)

The University of Maryland Center for Celiac Research, <http://celiaccenter.org/>

This is a clip from CBS Evening News with Katie Couric
http://www.cbsnews.com/sections/i_video/main500251.shtml?id=2072234n

Sincerely,