

# Resource for family and friends: Cross contamination and Celiac Disease

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Thank you for taking the time to read this.

This is to help you get a **better understanding** of Celiac Disease.

Celiac Disease is an **autoimmune condition**. This means when people with this condition consume gluten, (no matter how tiny that amount is) their immune system recognizes the protein of gluten as a threat and so attacks it. In doing so, however, the immune system damages the gut lining. This can make someone with Celiac disease feel really sick for a few days or even weeks.

People with Celiac disease **need to avoid gluten life long** in order to stop the autoimmune attack. There is no cure, no medication or treatment other than avoiding foods with gluten. Unfortunately, the immune system will trigger this attack no matter how much time has passed because the body's memory cells remember what it deems a threat.

Unfortunately, avoiding gluten is harder than many think and that is why it is more than just having gluten-free food for someone with Celiac Disease. **If their food is cooked, prepared, stored or handled with gluten food or has come into contact where gluten food was, it is enough to make them sick and trigger an autoimmune attack.**

They are not being dramatic, hyper sensitive, a hypochondriac, nor are they looking for attention. It is simply the way it happens, even a crumb is enough to cause harm.

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People with Celiac disease did not chose to have this condition and do not enjoy the burden that comes with this condition.

It can emotionally, socially, financially and mentally draining.

It is good to try and understand from their perspective...they feel like a bother and an inconvenience when it comes to having to prepare or cook their food separately and safely. But by doing so, you are helping to **alleviate much of their anxiety and stress** around this condition.

If you are the family member of someone with Celiac disease, please also keep in mind that it is an **inherited genetic condition** and immediate family members carry a much higher risk of developing it themselves. Therefore, please get tested and watch for any symptoms.

### **What can you do?**

- \*learn about the condition so that you can help
- \*Be prepared to learn how cross contamination happens
- \*understand that it is a medical condition, not a food allergy and cannot be reversed.
- \*keeping gluten-free staples at your home for when they stay or visit can help.
- \*having a few basic gluten-free recipes on hand can help so that they do not feel left out at social gatherings.

Your support, love and care can do much to help someone with this condition.