

How to say No to food (and when you may need to)

There will always be THOSE people that insist they know better, that Celiac disease is not a real condition, that "a little bit won't hurt"

Learning how to respond can save you a lot of anxiety and stress.

At times you may need to be **firm about refusing food** even from people who have the best intentions. This can make you feel guilty.

#scenario 1

Perhaps you have been sick and had to stay at home for a few days. Someone you know messages/phones you to ask if they can **bring a meal**. How do you respond?

"Thank you so much for your kind and thoughtful gesture, and I would love to accept, but unfortunately I have Celiac Disease and this means I can't eat gluten"

They might **insist** that they can make a gluten-free meal in which case you could say *"I really do not want to cause you any extra work, unfortunately, it is not that simple. Gluten-free food for people with Celiac also has to be prepared so that it does not come into any direct or indirect contact with gluten. So in my house, I have dedicated equipment and cooking utensils and a separate area for cooking my gluten-free food. So while I appreciate your willingness, please understand that I am still learning to trust others with food preparation but I am not quite ready for that yet."*

We can't anticipate if others will be offended but we can be kind and thankful when refusing food.

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Further to this, you could say something like:

"If you like, _____ (mention a shop/bakery you know offers safe gluten-free food) has _____ (mention a product) and I know their food is prepared and made in a dedicated facility, so that would be okay if you want to do something like that."

#secenrio2

You are at an event and there is a large buffet of food and someone asks you why you are not eating anything. You could say:

"I would love to, but I have Celiac disease so I can't anything with gluten in it".

At this stage, they will either stare blankly at you, nod and change the topic or probe you for more information, such as "Surely a little bit won't hurt?"

You could say:

"Actually it is not just a gluten intolerance, it is an autoimmune condition. So even a little bit of gluten sparks an autoimmune attack for me. I wish it wasn't so, but unfortunately it is a lifelong medical condition".

Hopefully by this, you have created awareness and educated them but also tactfully made your situation clear.

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#scenario 3

Someone is mocking you about being on a fad diet or says something like "Oh you are one of those fancy gluten-free dieters".

You could say:

"I agree, it annoys me too when people who don't need to avoid gluten do so, but for some people like myself, I have an autoimmune condition called Celiac disease. So in my case, I really cannot eat gluten because it attacks my immune system. "

They might still seem disbelieving or critical but at least you have made a clear distinction between a fad dieter and someone with a medical reason to do so.

Of course, it would be impossible to list every possible scenario you may encounter, but it would be prudent to keep the following in mind, so that no matter what you face, you can try give an answer.

1. Be Kind, tactful, respectful
2. Aim to briefly educate in a way that explains without being preachy or condescending.
3. Be firm about your stance.
4. walk away if necessary.
5. If someone continues to mock you, you could simply say *"It seems that you don't fully understand how serious Celiac disease is. But I don't have to accept your behavior"* and calmly walk away.