

Best Practices in the Classroom for Children or Teens Who Have Celiac Disease

1. Use non-food materials in the classroom
2. Use non-food rewards in classroom

(1) or (2) should always be possible, but if there is agreement that should not be the case:

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Do

Do always communicate **with parents** (not the minor – child/teen) at least 2 school days in advance any time a food will be served in the classroom and let parents know how it will be used, exactly what date it will be used on, and whether it will be offered to be eaten. Include exact images of all product(s) including brand(s), flavor(s), container size(s), and ingredients, when student may be ingesting, inhaling or touching the food.

Do be inclusive and open to trying similar but celiac-safe parent approved foods instead so that everyone can equally participate.

Do keep the work surfaces clean that a child/teen with celiac may use. Use a spray bottle and paper towels (INSTEAD OF antibacterial wipes, a cloth towel, or a sponge) to clean the surfaces where food particles were present.

Do respect the student's right to privacy and confidentiality about their disease.

Do give student immediate access to the bathroom and water whenever needed.

Do understand when they are exposed to gluten it may take anywhere from weeks to months to heal during which time they may exhibit symptoms such as irritability, anxiety, or difficult concentrating.

Do have all students wash their hands when done working with or eating food in the classroom.

Do refuse food from being brought into the classroom when the student's 504 plan isn't followed.

Do be aware crumbs can make a child/teen with celiac sick and can have short and longer term consequences for the student.

Do let the child/teen with celiac eat the first portion when serving a food to a class to help prevent cross contact.

Don't

Don't create a situation which excludes or removes children/teens from classroom.

Don't call attention to the child's/teen's disability publicly. They have a right to privacy/confidentiality about their disability. Additionally, this will lead to unwanted questions from other students about what happens when their disease is triggered which is very embarrassing for them and can lead them to want to blend in more and "cheat" next time.

Don't allow flour or concentrated gluten paste in your classroom.

Don't exclude certain kids in the class who can't eat a food. Find a food that allows them to participate equally (or get an agreed upon comparable substitute) to the food being served in the class.

Don't assume a child can just read a label or look online to determine if a product is safe for the child/teen with celiac disease, as this is often not possible without additional research.

Don't assume celiac disease is a type of food allergy or that there is any treatment or medicine for it (like an epi-pen).

Don't ask the student if they mind deviating from their 504 plan.

Don't put children/teens in a situation where they would be excluded from an activity or removed from classroom.

Don't assume the child/teen will always be aware that they have ingested gluten.

1 and 2 are recommendations for teachers per the CDC, USDA, FARE, and AAP