



THE DISH ON GLUTEN



Today in class we talked about gluten. Some people cannot eat gluten because they have celiac disease or a gluten sensitivity. It can be challenging to eat only gluten-free foods, especially for children. Social situations like birthday parties can be uncomfortable for children who have to eat special, gluten-free treats. Their friends may tease them because of the special treatment they receive. This lesson helped students understand why some children need to eat only gluten-free foods and to be kind to them rather than teasing or treating them differently.

Gluten is a protein found in wheat, rye, barley, and sometimes oats. Gluten is harmless for most people except those with celiac disease or a gluten sensitivity. Celiac disease damages the small intestine and keeps the body from absorbing nutrients from food. People who have celiac disease cannot eat any food that has gluten. Their immune system responds to the gluten by damaging the small intestine. It can cause gas, bloating and diarrhea. If not treated it can affect growth and cause damage to the nervous system. It can also cause people to be malnourished.

Some people who need to avoid gluten do not have celiac disease. They have a gluten sensitivity. These people may feel sick when they eat foods with gluten in them but the inside of their bodies are not affected by the gluten. They want to eat gluten-free so they feel better every day.

AT HOME ACTIVITY

Gluten-free grains include rice, corn (maize), soy, potato, tapioca, beans, garfava, sorghum, quinoa (KEEN-wah), millet, buckwheat, arrowroot, amaranth, teff, Montina®, flax, and nut flours and uncontaminated oats. The next time you are at a grocery store or ordering groceries online, look to see how many of these products your grocer carries. Can you find them all?

HUNGER TRACKER

Use a hunger tracker system to support you and your child's effort to learn more about hunger signals. Perhaps a 1 to 5 scale along these lines:

- 1 = I'm very hungry; my stomach is growling and I'm feeling weak or tired.
- 2 = I'm fairly hungry.
- 3 = Neutral, I feel satisfied, content.
- 4 = I'm starting to feel full.
- 5 = I ate way too much and am uncomfortable.

Track your hunger signals for the next few days after each meal to see if you are eating more or less than your body is signaling you to eat.

