



Safety Trumps Picky Eating by Carla Carter

Extracted from Children's Corner: "What's In Your School Lunchbox?"
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Here are a few tips with what we plan to do:

- Meet with the school nurse and teacher prior to school starting to explain what celiac disease is as well as the safety parameters that need to be put in place prior to starting. Make a handout for them to keep and to refer to. Ask questions such as: Where will she sit during snack time in the classroom? Who will she sit next to? Will someone help her wipe down the table before meals or will she have to do it herself? In the lunchroom, where will she sit to keep her safe, but without isolating her? Will staff reinforce hand-washing prior to meals? During which other school-based activities will gluten be present (playdough, food experiments, etc.)?
- We plan on making all of her snacks and lunches moving forward because I simply do not trust people enough to consistently keep my 5-year old safe. However, if your child will eat from the school kitchen, a discussion with the head of the kitchen as well as line staff will be necessary as well as frequent checks to confirm the carry-over of safety precautions.
- Some people elect to start a 504 plan, which allows for reasonable accommodations for K-12 students with disabilities. Celiac disease is seen as a disability which is one reason that a full diagnosis from a medical professional is important as you cannot apply for this plan without one. If you choose this option, talk with your school of how to apply for and implement the 504 plan.

We will be doing our work ahead of time to plan and prepare as much as possible for the new school year. Food safety is our number one concern because without a healthy, happy body, it's difficult for a child to learn effectively and to thrive as the years pass. However, we also have to do it all with a sense of humor and some flexibility because as anyone with young kids or young adults knows, you can set up a plan but kids have a tendency to throw a wrench in those plans and you've just got to go with the flow.