

The Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act
FDA Docket # 2005N-0279

Please take my following comments and suggestions into consideration!!!

I am the mother of four daughters (ages 3, 7, 10 & 11), three of whom have celiac disease. We have known about their condition for a year, and it has been the toughest year of my life. We have raised our children vegetarian, and when we discovered we had to eliminate all wheat, rye, barley and oats and their derivatives from our diet we considered eating meat. But our girls would have no part of that! So, I struggle every day with what to feed them to keep them healthy. I make all of their baked goods from scratch and try to find gluten free convenience foods. Our youngest daughter asks all the time as to the gluten status of foods. If I don't know, she tells me to call. Unfortunately this isn't always possible. Frequently there is no contact information for the manufacturer. Many times if I am able to reach someone they simply do not have the information. We have become frustrated!

1. I understand that gluten is a general term that includes the proteins of all grains. I feel, though, that "GLUTEN-FREE" only needs to cover the proteins found in wheat, rye, barley, spelt, all wheat related grains and possibly oats (oats are tricky-look at the studies).

If a label states that a product is gluten free it should mean that all of the following are true:

- a. that the product does not contain any of the dangerous grain proteins known to affect those with celiac disease
- b. that the product was not contaminated with gluten (either through farming, processing, manufacturing, or packaging)
- c. that the product has been tested negative for gluten

So many ingredients are derived from wheat and related grains, and at this point there is no way for the consumer, and many times the manufacturer, to know if a specific ingredient is gluten free. Those with celiac disease NEED to know what they are putting into their bodies. In order to live long, healthy lives celiacs MUST be gluten free.

2. I feel very strongly that "GLUTEN" should be added to the list of major allergens. After all, so many people have a DISEASE that is caused by gluten. It seems only natural that it be included in the list.

3. I find out that a food is gluten free many ways. First I like to see that a manufacturer writes "GLUTEN-FREE" on the packaging. Second I read the ingredients list and the list of possible contaminants or allergens (unfortunately these cover only wheat and not the other grains). If I find that an ingredient is questionable then I call or e-mail the manufacturer. I spend several hours a month investigating the safety of food for my girls.

4. I would say that half of the packaged food that I buy for my daughters is marked "GLUTEN-FREE". These include soups, cereals, flours, cookies, and frozen items.

5. "GLUTEN-FREE" printed on a package absolutely influences my decision to buy a product! I will buy the "GLUTEN-FREE" labeled product over a comparable product that is not labeled "GLUTEN-FREE." I would make the same decision each and every time I was faced with the same scenario.

6. I also beg of you that you require manufactures of prescription and otc drugs to follow the same guidelines for labeling.

7. I'm not sure that having more than one level of gluten-free is all that helpful. No one is sure about the amounts of gluten that need to be ingested before damage occurs to the small intestine. It may even be different from person to person. This being the case, I feel that "GLUTEN-FREE" need to mean just that. I suppose it is possible to include a label that states "made from non-gluten ingredients." This would be equally informative and would mean just that.

Thank you so much for allowing input on this subject. So many people are governed by a gluten-free lifestyle. Please help it to be a little easier!

Sincerely,

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