

Spiritual Communion -- "Spiritual Communion" is an act expressing what was described by St. Thomas Aquinas as "an ardent desire to receive Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament and in lovingly embracing Him." We ask our Lord to come to us in the same way He would if we were able to receive the sacrament. Spiritual communion is always available and might be especially appropriate when traveling or attending Mass outside your parish.

Suggested Guidelines for Celiacs Who Wish To Receive The Low-Gluten Host

Based on information from the University of Chicago DX: Celiac Newsletter

The decision to receive the low-gluten host should be based on the individual's current health, how well the gluten-free diet is being followed, and the comfort level of the person and his or her physician.

1. Establish that the IgG and IgA antigliadins and tTg are well within the normal range. If not, taking the host is not an option until they are.
2. Discuss receiving the host with your doctor and schedule a follow-up appointment in six months.
3. Work out an arrangement with your priest. There is no need to consume the entire host; taking only 1/4 of a host is quite acceptable.
4. Check levels of the antibodies again in six months. If they are higher, evaluate how much of the host you are taking or discontinue use. If they are the same, continue using the same amount, and return for testing in another six months.

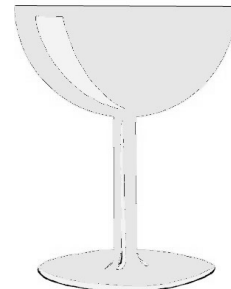
Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration

The Sisters' website is at:
<http://www.benedictinesisters.org>

There is an order form located at:
<http://www.benedictinesisters.org/altarbread/orderform.html>

Look for "Low Gluten Breads" at the bottom of the form.

Their telephone number is: 1-800-223-2772.



<http://www.catholicceliacs.org>

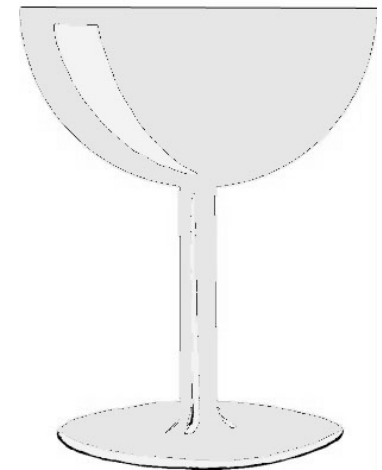
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Catholic Celiac Society

The Catholic Celiac Society has been organized to educate Catholic celiacs about their options for Holy Communion as provided for by canon law and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops; to inform Catholic clergy and lay ministers about the special needs of Catholic celiacs in their dioceses and parishes; and to reconcile those Catholic celiacs who have left the Church because of lack of understanding, exclusion from the Eucharist, and isolation from their church community.

INFORMATION ABOUT CATHOLIC COMMUNION AND CELIAC DISEASE





“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.” Matthew 7:7

Catholic Communion and Celiac Disease

Catholics with celiac disease face a special challenge when it comes to the Church and the Holy Eucharist. Canon law states that the host must be made of wheat and water and contain no foreign materials or impurities. From the time that the Lord Jesus took bread and wine and told his disciples “Do this in memory of me,” the Roman Catholic Church has faithfully protected the integrity of the Eucharist by only allowing wheat flour and water for the bread and pure grape juice for the wine to be used in the sacred liturgy. Catholic celiacs cannot safely share in the Eucharist using traditional altar breads.

Celiac Disease

Celiac disease, or celiac sprue, is an inherited autoimmune condition that is estimated to affect 1 in every 133 people in the United States. The disease is an immune system malfunction that causes the body to attack the lining of the small intestine as well as other organs. Damage is triggered by exposing the immune system to certain proteins, commonly called gluten, which are found in the cereal grains wheat, rye, and barley. Celiac disease is a lifelong affliction; there is no cure. Damage to the small intestine occurs every time gluten is consumed, regardless of whether symptoms are present. The only treatment is to adopt what is called the gluten-free diet, which completely eliminates the offending proteins from the celiac’s diet.

To learn more about celiac disease:

<http://celiac.org>

<http://www.gluten.net/celiac.html>

Holy Communion Options

The celebration of the Holy Eucharist and the reception of Holy Communion have been called the very source and summit of the Christian life. Every Catholic in good standing has the right to receive Holy Communion (Canon 843). The Church has been studying the issue of Holy Communion for people with celiac disease very carefully. In Europe and other parts of the world, Catholic celiacs have used wheat starch based low-gluten hosts for Holy Communion for years. In these parts of the world, medical standards are different, and specially treated wheat starch is considered to be an acceptable part of the gluten-free diet treatment of celiac disease. The clinical outcome for celiac patients in these other areas has not been shown to be significantly different from that seen in celiacs in North America who use a more stringent version of the gluten-free diet. In keeping with tradition, the Church has stipulated that completely gluten-free hosts are not valid matter for the celebration of the Eucharist. However, the Church has approved of the use of low-gluten wheat starch based hosts provided that “they contain the amount of gluten sufficient to obtain the consecration of bread without the addition of foreign materials and without the use of procedures that would alter the nature of bread.”

The doctrine of concomitance teaches that under either species of bread or wine, the whole of Christ is received. Catholic celiacs are therefore encouraged to receive the Eucharist in the form of the Precious Blood. This is more easily accomplished in parishes that routinely offer Holy Communion under both species; however Catholic celiacs have the right to request Holy Communion in the form of consecrated wine from a separate chalice regardless of whether the Precious Blood is offered to the rest of the faithful present at a given celebration of Mass. Catholic celiacs are usually no longer required to present medical certification documenting their condition when they request accommodation for Holy Communion from their pastor. Their pastor generally does not need specific permissions from their bishop in order to meet the needs of their celiac parishioner.

Consecrated Wine -- Holy communion under the form of wine is safe, provided that the chalice is free of any particles of wheat. Celiacs should not receive from the priest’s chalice because of the fermentum, a tiny fraction of the regular wheat host, that is added to his chalice during the fraction rite. An easy way to avoid problems is for celiacs to receive from a chalice used only by celiacs and that is

in some way distinct so that it will not be confused with the other chalices on the altar table. No particle of the consecrated host should be placed in this chalice. A distinctive chalice also reminds the priest and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion that a parishioner with special needs is present.

The particular arrangements for receiving Holy Communion should be discussed with the celebrant and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion before Mass so that all parties involved are comfortable with the agreed-upon procedure. Every effort should be made to enhance the feeling of inclusion of the celiac at the Eucharist.

Catholic celiacs may choose to receive consecrated wine at a regular communion station if their parish offers communion under both species. There is greater risk for contamination using this option, but it has the benefit of allowing the celiac to receive Holy Communion with the rest of the community without feeling isolated or singled out for special treatment. When using this option, it makes good sense for a celiac to be near the “front of the line” when receiving communion to minimize the risk of cross-contamination.

In the case of Catholic celiacs affected by alcoholism or other conditions which prevent the ingestion of even the smallest amount of consecrated wine, the use of mustum is allowed. Mustum is a grape juice in which fermentation has been suspended so that there is very minimal alcohol content.

Low-Gluten Hosts -- A special, extremely low-gluten host has been developed for Catholic celiacs by the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. These hosts are produced and packaged in a dedicated environment. They have been checked for gluten by the American Institute of Baking using the ELISA (Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay) method. This analysis determined that the gluten level in the low-gluten hosts was less than 0.01%.

The low-gluten hosts should be placed in a clean pyx (a small container used to carry the Eucharist to the sick). A pyx is inexpensive and may be purchased at a religious supplies store. Preferably, the pyx containing the low-gluten hosts should not be placed in the ciborium with the other hosts and should be closed after consecration. There is risk of contamination from crumbs or dust from the regular hosts falling into an open pyx. The risk of cross contamination from hands during the administering of communion with the low-gluten host is very small. However, it makes good sense for the celiac to be near the “front of the line.”