

HOSPITAL STAY PREPARATION

Although hospital stays are not something most of us like to think about, it is likely that we will find ourselves in need of either emergency or major medical attention at some time in our lives. For a celiac, it is vitally important to have a plan mapped out for use when such events arise. A well prepared plan can ease the stress of hospitalization and help assure that your gluten-free diet is strictly followed. Here are some suggestions for a hospitalization plan.

First, designate a person who can step in and serve as your liaison with a hospital if you are unable to convey your own needs. This person can be a family member, close friend, or local chapter member, but most importantly, this person must be knowledgeable about celiac disease in general and your own specific needs. Verify procedures for such a designation with your primary health care provider; in some cases this may require your designee to have durable power of attorney for health care decisions.

Secondly, prepare packet(s) of information including:

- A listing of all current medications (be sure to keep this list up to date)
- A listing of over-the-counter drugs, supplements and medicinal herbs you are taking
- A listing of any food or environmental allergies or sensitivities in addition to celiac disease
- In cooperation with your primary care physician, a listing of gluten-free pain relievers and antibiotics that you have used successfully
- Copies of "Diet Management" and "Living a Full Life" pamphlets available from CSA.
- Contact information for your liaison, local chapter, CSA

Keep a packet for yourself; discuss and provide copies to your designated liaison, your primary care physician, and have copies prepared for hospital admissions and dietary staff.

If you are scheduled for admission to a medical facility, and you have time to make preparations, make an appointment for you and/or your liaison to meet with the hospital dietitian and/or food service director. The information you provide at this meeting is somewhat dependent on the celiac disease knowledge level of the dietary staff. Bring a packet of material for the dietary staff and ***The CSA Gluten-Free Product Listing*** with you to the meeting. (If your hospital does not have a copy, they may wish to order one from CSA prior to your stay). Be specific about your dietary needs and kitchen procedures; suggest foods available in the local area to substitute for gluten-containing breads, pastas, snacks, and cereals. Tell them about Toast-It bags to keep your gluten-free bread free from crumbs. You may also wish to suggest ready-made gluten-free entrees that can be ordered, heated and served to you, thus eliminating cross contact and contamination. Including samples of some typical menus you eat at home will be helpful to the dietary staff.

Upon admittance, verify celiac disease is listed as your primary condition on admittance forms. Even if you are being treated for a broken hip, you are a *celiac* being treated for an orthopedic condition.

When you have been admitted and have arrived in your room, share information about your condition with the nurses, aides and staff. Have another packet ready to share—the people responsible for your day to day care may not always receive all the information you have shared with the dietary staff. The more informed your caregivers are, the less likely it will be that you will have to deal with gluten issues.

In the event of an emergency admittance, or if you are unable to convey your needs personally, your designated liaison will need to have as much information as possible to help the hospital meet your dietary needs. The following form may be of assistance as part of your packet of information.