

Before You Go

- **Look at each school's dining hall website.** Find out how they handle special food needs. Contact the school's dietitian or the person in charge of dining services. Ask them what gluten-free choices they have and how they prevent cross-contact (when gluten from other foods gets into gluten-free food during preparation or serving). You can call, email, or set up a meeting when you visit.
- **Check out helpful websites.** The Celiac Disease Foundation (celiac.org) and Beyond Celiac (beyondceliac.org) have tips and tools for eating gluten-free, including how to find safe food options at schools and restaurants. You can also search online for reviews from students who eat gluten-free at different colleges.
- **Eat in the dining hall when you visit a campus.** This lets you see for yourself what the gluten-free area looks like and how well it is maintained. Look for dedicated gluten-free serving stations with separate utensils and serving areas. Try eating a meal there so you know what to expect.
- **Look for a gluten-free student group on campus.** Talk to members and ask what it's really like to eat gluten-free at that school.
- **Ask about meal plan costs.** Find out if you have to pay the full price for on-campus dining, or if there are other options, such as a reduced meal plan or dining dollars, if the school cannot fully meet your needs.
- **Ask about disability accommodations.** Celiac disease may qualify as a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Contact the school's disability services office to find out what accommodations are available, such as a modified meal plan, permission to have a microwave or mini fridge in your dorm, or a medical single room with kitchen access. Getting these accommodations in writing before you arrive can save a lot of stress later.

What to Bring

1. **A microwave and mini refrigerator.** Some schools make you rent these, so check before you buy. Toasters and hot plates are usually not allowed in dorm rooms, but ask if they can make an exception for you as a medical accommodation. A dedicated gluten-free toaster is important — shared toasters are a common source of cross-contact.
2. **A plate, bowl, and utensils.** You'll need these if you make food in your room. Disposable ones can be a good idea if you don't have a sink nearby to wash dishes. Using your own dishes also helps you avoid cross-contamination, which is when gluten from someone else's food gets on your plate or utensils.
3. **Gluten-free food staples.** Bring foods that don't need to be kept cold, like cereal, energy bars, crackers, nut butter, and snacks. If you have a microwave, bring gluten-free instant

oatmeal (make sure it says "gluten-free" on the label), soups, popcorn, and ready-to-heat meals. These are great for when the dining hall choices get boring or when you need a quick meal in your room.

Staying Safe on Campus

- Check your medications and supplements. Gluten can be hidden in prescription and over-the-counter medications, vitamins, and supplements. Ask your pharmacist to confirm that your medications are gluten-free and look for supplements that are labeled gluten-free.
- Know that social situations can be tricky. Research shows that college-age students with celiac disease have the highest rates of gluten exposure — sometimes on purpose, sometimes by accident. Eating and drinking in social settings, at parties, and during travel are high-risk situations. Having a plan ahead of time (like eating before you go or bringing your own food) can help.
- Stay connected with your care team. Continue to see your gastroenterologist and dietitian regularly, even while at school. If your school is far from home, ask your care team for a referral to a provider near campus.
- Connect with other students. Living gluten-free can feel isolating, especially in a new environment. Joining a campus celiac or food allergy group, or connecting with online communities, can provide practical tips and emotional support.