

## Man with Dietary Medical Need Suffers in Prison

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In a recent article from [the Marshall Project](#), Peter Inserra describes his particularly horrific incarceration for 14 months in New York state prisons. As a man with Celiac disease, he had to cope with having basic medical needs denied in addition to his loss of physical liberty. [Celiac disease](#) is an auto-immune disease that requires those who have it to follow a strict gluten free diet (i.e. one free of wheat, rye, and barley) in order to avoid vomiting, diarrhea, and numerous other symptoms. Even trace amounts of gluten can cause violent symptoms, and frequent exposure can cause severe long-term health consequences such as colon cancer.

Mr. Inserra provides a harrowing account of how he was denied gluten free food for an extended period of time at the beginning of his incarceration and again when he was transferred to another prison. He recalls how “food was running through me, and I was losing weight. When added to the anxiety of prison’s... environment, I became a mess of physical frustration.” When Mr. Inserra’s “special diet” was finally approved, he was provided with meals consisting mostly of hard taco shells and rice, and he was still frequently exposed to gluten through [cross-contamination](#). He frequently became very ill, and lost 25 pounds in only four months.

The situation that Mr. Inserra faced is unacceptable. A 14-month sentence should not be accompanied by physical agony and colon cancer because prison officials cannot be bothered to provide for a basic medical need.