



ARCHDIOCESE OF BOSTON

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION AND ALLERGIES

In recent years there has been an increased awareness about children's allergies to peanuts, dairy, eggs and wheat, barley and rye - also known as Celiac Disease.

It is important that Directors/Coordinators of Faith Formation know of the allergies that children, who participate in the parish programs, may have and know the proper procedures to follow in meeting the needs of these children, in particular, children preparing to receive First Holy Communion who have Celiac Disease, an allergy to wine or both.

In these situations, we ask you to consider the following guidelines:

- Notify the pastor and develop a plan for the child to receive First Holy Communion. Early identification and discussion with the pastor, parents and child is critical.

In preparing both children and parents for First Holy Communion, it is important to introduce the consecrated host and chalice to the first Communicants and parents to ensure the understanding and acceptance that the consecrated chalice is just as important as the "Body of Christ – the consecrated host.

- For children with Celiac Disease, a "gluten-free" host cannot be substituted for the host but a "low-gluten" host is acceptable.

For bread to be valid matter for the celebration of the Eucharist, it must be made of wheat. If a low gluten host cannot be tolerated by the child, then a dedicated cup of the Precious Blood should be reserved for the child. Every effort should be made to ensure that the child and family do not view their situation as being different in any way from the other children and families receiving the Sacrament.

- If there is an allergy to both wheat and to wine, then mustum may be substituted. Mustum is grape juice in which fermentation has begun, has been suspended with the result that its alcohol content does not reach the levels found in most table wines. Information as to where to obtain mustum is provided in the document referenced below.

Best Practices

Please see the document entitled: *An Introduction to Holy Communion, Celiac Disease and Alcohol Intolerance, and the Church's Pastoral Response in the Archdiocese of Boston*. It was developed and issued by the Office for Divine Worship. We recommend that this document be distributed and discussed with catechists and parents at least twice a year.

Contact Information

Questions and concerns can be directed to:

- **Thomas Lyman**, Coordinator of Divine Worship and Evangelization Consultant, Office of Divine Worship, Office of Lifelong Faith Formation & Parish Support, Thomas_Lyman@rcab.org or 617-746-5880
- **Patrick Krisak**, Director, Faith Formation & Missionary Discipleship, Office of Lifelong Faith Formation & Parish Support, Patrick_Krisak@rcab.org or 617-746-5753