

# Canadian Celiac Association

Professional Advisory Council Position Statement: NIMA Sensor

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## SUMMARY:

The Canadian Celiac Association's Professional Advisory Council (PAC) was asked to review the NIMA Sensor device as it was recently launched in Canada.

The PAC is not aware of any published independent or third party scientific data that defines the accuracy of this device. There are potential difficulties in the measurement of the gluten content of food including:

- using a sample that is representative of the food being consumed,
- detectability of gluten in the food matrix, and
- type of assay used to detect gluten.

**At the present time, the CCA Professional Advisory Council DOES NOT RECOMMEND that people with celiac disease or non-celiac gluten sensitivity use the NIMA Sensor device to determine the gluten status of a food for the reasons outlined below. We will continue to evaluate scientific information about the NIMA device as it becomes available.**

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## What does this mean for Canadian consumers?

Gluten testing is a complex process.

### Sampling error

One small spot of gluten on your plate can make you ill, but you cannot guess where it is on your plate. Trying to find the right sample is very difficult - you might miss the gluten by millimeters and think the entire plate is safe.

### Complexity of processed food

Once food is combined and processed with other ingredients, detecting gluten can be difficult due to the transformations that occur during cooking. Other ingredients in the food may interact with the gluten test giving a false report.

### Testing

Improper testing of foods can give false readings, either positive or negative. This can lead to consuming foods that contain gluten or avoiding safe foods. For this reason, gluten testing of foods should be done by trained experts in an accredited laboratory so that:

- appropriate validated tests can be selected to match the characteristics of the food
- the food is thoroughly mixed to ensure even distribution of the ingredients before testing
- adequate number of samples are taken for gluten testing

The Canadian Celiac Association Professional Advisory Council DOES NOT RECOMMEND that people with celiac disease or gluten sensitivity use this device to determine the gluten status of a food until scientific data demonstrating its accuracy are available. Instead, it is essential that individuals ask questions about the food ingredients, preparation and serving procedures.

## **Tips for Eating Away from Home**

Here are some questions you should ask...

- Ask what the restaurant recommends for gluten-free consumers.
- Ask if gluten-free meals are prepared in a separate area of the kitchen with clean utensils. If not, what steps are taken to prevent accidental contact with gluten.
- Ask very specific questions based on what you are ordering or being served. For example:
  - Is the food cooked in a shared pan or grill where gluten-containing items had been previously prepared?
  - Are gluten-free items cooked in oil that was used for any gluten-containing items?
  - Are vegetables re-heated in the water used to cook pasta?
  - Was fresh water and a clean colander used to cook gluten-free pasta?
  - Do the sauces, marinades, salad dressing and seasonings contain gluten (the brands used in restaurants may have different formulations than ones used at home)
  - Is the meat, poultry, fish or seafood prepared with gluten-containing ingredients (e.g., dusted, dredged or coated with flour)
  - Does the rice pilaf contain other grains (e.g., barley, wheat)