

CONDITON: Celiac Disease

What is it: Celiac disease is an immune reaction to eating gluten, a protein found in wheat, barley and rye.

Who is at risk: Celiac can happen to anyone but it seems to be more common among those with a family member with celiac disease or dermatitis herpetiformis, Type 1 diabetes, Down syndrome or Turner syndrome, Autoimmune thyroid disease, Sjogren's syndrome, or Microscopic colitis (lymphocytic or collagenous colitis)

Cause: If you have Celiac, eating gluten triggers an immune response in your small intestine that over time damages the lining in your small intestine resulting in malabsorption. The immune response damages the villi on the small intestinal wall floor

Symptoms: Weight loss and diarrhea are the most common but there are many varying symptoms

Anemia, usually resulting from iron deficiency, Loss of bone density (osteoporosis) or softening of bone (osteomalacia), Itchy, blistering skin rash (dermatitis herpetiformis), Damage to dental enamel, Headaches and fatigue, Nervous system injury, including numbness and tingling in the feet and hands, and possible problems with balance, Joint pain, Reduced functioning of the spleen (hyposplenism), and Acid reflux and heartburn

Infants can show signs such as: Chronic diarrhea, Swollen belly, Pain, and Failure to thrive or weight loss

Older Children can show signs such as: Diarrhea, Constipation, Short stature, Delayed puberty, Neurologic symptoms, including attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), learning disability, headaches and lack of muscle coordination

How is it diagnosed: Three tests are used to diagnose Celiac Disease

1. Blood test looking for elevated antibodies in your blood after eating gluten
2. Endoscopy if your blood test results reveal antibodies, your doctor may want a biopsy of the small intestine.
3. Capsule Endoscopy which is a camera in pill form swallowed to take thousands of pictures of your entire small intestine.

Complications: Eventually your brain nervous system, bones, liver and other organs can be deprived of vital nourishment. In children malabsorption can prevent growth and development.

Treatment: Strict gluten free diet can prevent symptoms and promote intestinal healing. If the malabsorption has been severe your doctor may recommend vitamins in addition to a GF diet. Some patients that have severe intestinal damage may have to have steroid treatment to reduce the inflammation of the small intestine as well.

Did you know? (fun or interesting fact about condition)

1/141 people have celiac disease (some go undiagnosed)

The disease can be triggered after severe emotional stress, pregnancy, childbirth, surgery or a viral illness.