

Celiac Disease

Patient education

What is celiac disease?

Celiac disease is a condition in which your immune system attacks and damages your small intestine. This is referred to as an autoimmune disease. When a person with celiac disease consumes gluten-containing food, the immune system attacks the cells that line the small intestine. This reaction, over time, damages the small intestine and renders it unable to absorb nutrients from food.

Gluten can be found in wheat, rye, and barley, including food such as pasta, pizza, and cereal. Celiac disease is also known as celiac sprue, non-tropical sprue, and gluten-sensitive enteropathy, a digestive disorder.

What can cause celiac disease?

A gene inherited from a family member

What increases the risks?

- Family member with the celiac disease
- You have an autoimmune condition, (type 1 diabetes or a thyroid disorder)
- You are female

What are the possible symptoms of celiac disease?

- Reoccurring bloating, abdominal pain, or gas
- Chronic diarrhea
- Stool that is pale, bad-smelling, greasy, or oily
- Weight loss
- Missed menstrual periods
- Osteoporosis
- Weakness and fatigue
- Tingling and other symptoms of nerve damage
- Depression
- Poor appetite
- Rash

How to treat celiac disease?

This condition has no cure, but it can be managed with a gluten-free diet.

- Dairy foods, such as milk and cheese, are difficult to digest; treatment may also include avoiding them.
- Following a gluten-free diet will allow you to feel better and experience fewer symptoms.

*****In most cases, the intestine heals within 3 months to 2 years***

If you have been diagnosed with celiac disease, please contact your doctor or health care provider immediately if you are experiencing any of the following:

- You are on a gluten free diet but you still have ongoing symptoms
- Difficulty following a gluten-free diet
- Develop an itchy rash with small blisters
- Become extremely weak
- Develop balance issues
- Begin to experience new symptoms

Where can I get more information?

Canadian Celiac Association: <https://www.celiac.ca/>

Reference: Celiac Disease. (2021, June 07). Elsevier Inc: ClinicalKey for Nursing

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