

CELIAC DISEASE

(Gluten Enteropathy; Non-Tropical Sprue)



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

An allergic condition in the small intestine, triggered by gluten. Gluten is a protein found in most grains. It prevents the intestine from absorbing nutrients. Most forms of celiac disease are inherited. It usually begins during infancy or early childhood (2 weeks to 1 year). Symptoms may appear when the child first begins eating food with gluten. In adults, symptoms may develop gradually over months or even years.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Weight loss or slowed weight gain in an infant following the introduction of cereal to the diet.
- Poor appetite.
- Loose, pale, bulky, bad-smelling stools; frequent gas.
- Swollen abdomen; stomach pain.
- Mouth ulcers.
- Anemia or vitamin deficiency, with fatigue, pale skin, skin rash, or bone pain.
- Mildly bowed legs in children.
- Vague tiredness and weakness.
- Swollen legs.

CAUSES

Celiac disease is a congenital (present at birth) disorder. It is caused by an intolerance for gluten, a protein present in most grains.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Family history of celiac disease.
- Pregnancy.
- Other allergies.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Cannot be prevented at present.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

With a strict, gluten-free diet, most persons with celiac disease can expect a normal life. Improvement begins in 2 to 3 weeks.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

In rare cases, gluten withdrawal does not bring immediate improvement.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider may do a physical exam and ask questions about your symptoms. Medical tests may include blood, urine, and stool studies. A biopsy may be done (a small sample of tissue is taken from the small intestine for viewing under a microscope). Sometimes, diagnosis is based on a person going on a gluten-free diet to see if the symptoms stop.
- The only treatment is a gluten-free diet.
- To learn more: Celiac Sprue Association, P.O. Box 31700, Omaha, NE 68131; (877) 272-4272; website: www.csaceliacs.org or Celiac Disease Foundation, 13251 Ventura Blvd., Studio City, CA 91604; (818) 990-2354 (not toll free); website www.celiac.org.

MEDICATIONS

- Iron and folic acid for anemia may be prescribed.
- Calcium and multiple-vitamin supplements for deficiencies may be recommended.
- Cortisone drugs to reduce the body's inflammatory response may be prescribed.

ACTIVITY

No limits.

DIET

Gluten-free diet. Gluten is found in wheat, rye, barley, and possibly oats. It is difficult to exclude gluten from the diet completely. Be patient while becoming familiar with the diet. A dietitian can help you with a diet plan.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or your child has symptoms of celiac disease.
- Symptoms don't decrease after 3 weeks of eating a gluten-free diet.
- The child fails to regain lost weight or grow and develop as expected.
- Fever develops.

Special notes:
