

## **Diseases of the digestive system and liver**

### **Gluten-Sensitive Entero pathy (Celiac Disease**

Gluten-sensitive enteropathy or, as it is more commonly called, celiac disease, is an autoimmune inflammatory disease of the small intestine that is precipitated by the ingestion of gluten, a component of wheat protein, in genetically susceptible persons. Exclusion of dietary gluten results in healing of the mucosa, resolution of the mal absorptive state.

#### Symptoms

The signs and symptoms of celiac disease can vary greatly and differ in children and adults. Digestive signs and symptoms for adults include:

Diarrhea

Fatigue

Weight loss

Bloating and gas

Abdominal pain

Nausea and vomiting

Constipation

However, more than half the adults with celiac disease have signs and symptoms unrelated to the digestive system, including:

Anemia, usually from iron deficiency

Loss of bone density (osteoporosis) or softening of bone (osteomalacia)

Itchy, blistery skin rash

Mouth ulcers

Headaches and fatigue

Nervous system injury, including numbness and tingling in the feet and hands, possible problems with balance, and cognitive impairment

Joint pain

Reduced functioning of the spleen (hypo splenism)

Children

Children with celiac disease are more likely than adults to have digestive problems, including:

Nausea and vomiting

Chronic diarrhea

Swollen belly

Constipation

Gas

Pale, foul-smelling stools

The inability to absorb nutrients might result in:

Failure to thrive for infants

Damage to tooth enamel

Weight loss

Anemia

Irritability

Short stature

Delayed puberty

Neurological symptoms, including attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), learning disabilities, headaches, lack of muscle coordination and seizures

## Celiac Disease Causes and Risk Factors

Research hasn't found a definite cause of celiac disease. It tends to run in families and might be linked to certain genes. Stressful medical events such as a viral infection or surgery can trigger it. So can emotional trauma or pregnancy.

If one of your close family members has it, like a parent or sibling, you have a 1 in 10 chance of getting celiac disease.

## Celiac Disease Complications

Celiac disease can be dangerous if you don't get treatment. Complications may include:

Cancer, including intestinal lymphoma and small bowel cancer

Damaged tooth enamel

Infertility and miscarriage

Lactose intolerance

Malnutrition

Nervous system problems like seizures or pain and numbness in your hands and feet (peripheral neuropathy)

Pancreatic disease

Weak bones

Vitamin D, B12, and folate tests look for vitamin deficiencies.

Iron and ferritin tests look for iron deficiency.

Imaging tests show signs in the intestine, like wall thickening or changes to blood vessels.

Genetic testing looks for human leukocyte antigens to rule out celiac disease.

If you're on a gluten-free diet, you'll need to come off it before having the antibody test so the results will be correct.

If blood and other tests show that you might have celiac disease, you'll probably need to have an endoscopy. This procedure lets your doctor look at your small intestine and take a bit of tissue to see whether it's damaged.

## Treatment

There is no medication that treats celiac disease. To avoid the health problems that it can cause, you'll need to go completely gluten-free.