



Celiac disease

GLUTEN IS THE CULPRIT | Brenna Jacks, ND

Celiac disease is an autoimmune condition in which gluten acts as a toxin and causes the absorptive surfaces of the small intestine to flatten. This prevents the body from receiving important nutrients, vitamins, and minerals.

Recent statistics estimate that up to one in 133 Canadians has celiac disease. The actual cause is unknown; however, there is a strong genetic link. Other risk factors include being of European descent or having an existing autoimmune condition such as type 1 diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, or an autoimmune thyroid condition.

PREVENTION

Recent studies show that introducing gluten to infants between four to six months of age may lower the risk of developing the disease. Breastfeeding babies before, during, and after the

introduction of gluten may also provide a protective effect on newborns.

TREATMENT

The first line of treatment is the complete avoidance of all gluten in the diet. This requires 100 percent dedication, as any exposure can set off an immune reaction. This means that, to someone with celiac disease, a single crumb has the same effect as a slice of toast.

Some processed products such as bouillon cubes, potato chips, french fries, deli meats, sauces, and soups may also contain gluten. Be sure to check the product packaging. If you are sharing a

Foods to avoid

- barley
- bulgur
- cereal binding
- couscous
- durum
- einkorn
- emmer
- filler
- farro
- graham flour
- kamut
- malt
- malt extract
- malt flavouring
- malt syrup
- rye
- semolina
- spelt
- triticale
- wheat
- wheat bran
- wheat germ
- wheat starch

Remember, wheat free does not mean gluten free.

Though oats do not contain gluten, there is often some form of wheat contamination during their processing, therefore it is important to eat gluten-free oats and oat products.

"The first line of treatment is the complete avoidance of all gluten in the diet."

kitchen, be sure to use your own cutting boards, toaster, and wooden utensils to avoid contamination.

HEALING AIDS

Hypoallergenic multivitamins and digestive enzymes are important to aid in both healing the small intestine and providing the body with easy-to-absorb vitamins and minerals. A tailored treatment plan may also include probiotics, calcium, omega-3 fatty acids, and a bone-density formula.

Symptoms

Celiac disease is one of the most commonly misdiagnosed conditions due to its wide range of possible symptoms:

- bloating
- gas
- diarrhea
- constipation
- cramps
- itchy skin
- frequent headaches
- joint pain
- irritability in children

If you have experienced these symptoms weekly for three months or more, or if you have been diagnosed with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), eczema, chronic fatigue, or a nervous stomach you may want to be tested for celiac disease.

Testing for celiac disease in Canada

While Health Canada calls small-bowel biopsy the gold standard test for celiac detection, the Canadian Celiac Association (CCA) notes that blood tests are very helpful in diagnosing the disease.

The CCA states that either the IgA-human tissue transglutaminase (IgA-TTG) or IgA-endomysial antibody (IgA-EMA) test, or a combination of both, are recommended as screening tests. TTG and EMA tests are considered about 90 percent accurate for most patients.

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