

Is Gluten From Grains Making You Sick?

by Leslee Dru Browning

(NewsTarget) Gluten Intolerance, also known as Celiac Disease, was once thought to be a rare genetic disorder until 2003 when it was discovered that it is, indeed, quite common. Where once gluten intolerance was thought to affect 1 in 4000 people it is now thought to affect 1 in 133 and researchers expect that number to drop even lower. Yet, even with this new discovery many people in America are going undiagnosed.

Celiac disease is an inherited disease of the digestive system that damages the villi in the small intestine causing chronic inflammation rendering it unable to digest foods. The villi enables food digestion. The damage to the villi is caused by the protein [gluten](#) found in the following grains: wheat, rye, barely. Some gluten intolerant people are also sensitive to oats and millet. Many with gluten sensitivity are also allergic to milk.

When people with [celiac disease](#) eat grains that contain gluten their immune system responds by damaging the small intestine which, over time, causes malnutrition due to malabsorption of nutrients. Malabsorption can cause someone to appear anorexic, but also, obese.

I found that many of my patients who were obese and complained of hunger were actually hungry. Once they embarked on a gluten-free diet to heal the small intestine their hunger cravings subsided and they lost their excess weight. Being too thin or too heavy is just one of many reasons to be tested for gluten-intolerance.

Symptoms of Gluten Intolerance:

Gluten Intolerance can cause an array of symptoms. It affects each person differently. Common complaints are behavioral changes; bone or joint pain; fatigue; pale, foul-smelling, or fatty stool; inability to gain weight; muscle cramps and muscle weakness; stomach problems; tingling and numbness in legs from nerve damage.

Reviews of celiac disease in the world's leading independent general medical journal Lancet lists the following known problems associated to gluten when celiac disease is not diagnosed (Lancet 1997: 349: 1755 - Lancet 2003: 362: 383):

- Alopecia (abnormal hair loss)
- Anemia
- Mouth sores
- Arthritis
- Autoimmune diseases, glandular disorders or attacks on any organs are 10X more common in people with celiac
- Cancers (especially of the small bowel, lymphomas, esophageal)
- Dermatitis herpetiformis (a itchy skin rash)
- Elevated liver enzymes tests
- Gastroesophageal reflux (GERD)
- Gastrointestinal symptoms (abdominal discomfort, diarrhea, constipation)
- Infertility or miscarriage
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Lactose intolerance
- Liver disease of unknown origin
- Malabsorption of nutrients & nutritional deficiency such as iron, folic acid, calcium, magnesium and fat soluble vitamins
- Neurological symptoms such as peripheral neuropathy, ataxia, [epilepsy](#), cognitive dysfunction.
- Osteoporosis or osteopenia, check vitamin D level for malabsorption
- Psoriasis

Disease Linked to Celiac Disease:

People with celiac disease tend to have other autoimmune diseases. These diseases include epilepsy, thyroid disease, systemic lupus erythematosus, type 1 diabetes, vascular disease, rheumatoid [arthritis](#) and Sjogren's syndrome. A diagnosis of multiple sclerosis has

sometimes been given when in fact the person had celiac disease. Gluten may be the underlying causes of these autoimmune disorders.

How is Celiac Disease Diagnosed?

Years ago the only way to diagnose celiac disease was with a small bowel biopsy but today it can be diagnosed with simple blood tests that measure antibodies to gluten. Antibodies are proteins that react against the body. Those with celiac disease have high levels of antibodies to gluten in their blood. For the test to be accurate you must continue to eat grains containing gluten until you are tested. If not, the test results may be negative even if you have celiac disease.

What is the Treatment?

The treatment does not involve medication. Instead, you simply must follow a gluten-free diet.

For most people, following a gluten-free diet, will stop symptoms and heal intestinal damage. It will also prevent further damage. Noticeable improvements usually begin within a week of starting the diet but the small intestine may take anywhere from 3 to 6 months in mild cases and up to 2 years in severe cases to completely heal so that villi that can absorb nutrients from food into the bloodstream.

The Gluten-free Diet

A gluten-free diet means not eating foods that contain wheat (including spelt, triticale, teff, and kamut), rye, barley and oats. The foods and products made from these grains are also not allowed therefore food label reading is a must. Hidden sources of gluten include food additives such as modified food starch, preservatives, and stabilizers along with medicines, anti-acids, [vitamins](#), supplements and beverages.

People with celiac disease can eat rice, soy, amaranth, quinoa, potato, or bean flour instead of wheat flour. Grocery and health food stores now offer gluten-free bread, pasta, and other products. Gluten-free products are available on-line from many sources.

In order to stay healthy people with celiac disease must avoid gluten for the rest of their lives. Eating any gluten, no matter how minute an amount, can damage the small intestine.

Web References:

Excellent site for information on celiac disease. What to eat and where to purchase gluten-free foods:

Celiac Disease and Gluten-free Diet Information at www.Celiac.com

Foods that are safe for celiacs to eat and those that are not are listed at http://www.celiac.com/st_main.html?p_catid=12

Information on the FDA's new position on gluten-labeling can be found at Food Navigator: <http://www.foodnavigator-usa.com/news/ng.asp?n=80101&m=1FNU926&c=rmgrxyuscipjdni>

Book Reference:

Living Gluten-Free for DUMMIES by Danna Korn

About the author

Leslee Dru Browning is a 6th generation Medical Herbalist & Nutritionist from the ancestral line of Patty Bartlett Sessions; Pioneer Mid-Wife & Herbalist. Leslee practiced Medical Herbalism and Nutritional Healing for over 25 years and specialized in Cancer Wellness along with Chronic Illness. She now devotes her career to teaching people, through her writing, about Natural Healing from An Herbal Perspective.