

Celiac Disease

What is celiac disease?

Celiac (SEE-lee-ack) disease is swelling in the stomach caused by eating gluten. Gluten is a protein in foods made with grains such as wheat, rye, or barley. The swelling stops your body from getting the nutrients it needs. It can occur at any age. About one in 100 people have it.

What are the symptoms?

Some people with celiac disease have diarrhea, weight loss, bloating, nausea, or vomiting. Celiac disease can cause problems in other parts of the body, such as an itchy rash, bone weakness, or low red blood cell count.

How is it diagnosed?

The first step is usually a blood test. Do not eat differently before the test. If the results are not normal, or if you are at high risk of having the disease (for example, you have a relative with celiac disease), you may need more tests. Your doctor may do a test where a small camera is put down your throat to look into your stomach. A small piece of tissue will be taken for a test called a biopsy. The biopsy will show if you have celiac disease.

How is it treated?

There is no cure for celiac disease, but a gluten-free diet will help you feel better. Not eating gluten will help over time. The gluten-free diet needs to be followed for a lifetime. Your doctor may have you take vitamins while you are healing. You may need

to see a nutritionist to learn the best ways to avoid gluten in your diet. Your doctor may suggest you talk with other people who have celiac disease. Feeling better after eating a gluten-free diet does not mean you have celiac disease.

Which foods have gluten in them?

Gluten is in wheat, barley, and rye, so you should avoid foods with these ingredients, like bread, pasta, cereal, sauces, cake, and cookies. Some grains do not have gluten and can be eaten. These include corn, rice, and soy. Meat, fish, poultry, potatoes, fruits, and vegetables do not have gluten. Oats are safe to eat and may be an important addition to the gluten-free diet. Look for “gluten free” on food labels to avoid eating gluten by mistake.

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

<https://www.eatright.org/health/diseases-and-conditions/celiac-disease>

Beyond Celiac

<https://www.beyondceliac.org>

Celiac Disease Foundation

<https://www.celiac.org>

Gluten Intolerance Group

<https://www.gluten.org>

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/celiac-disease>

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