



**GLUTEN  
INTOLERANCE  
GROUP**



# Could Gluten Be Causing Your Health Problems?

*Updated July 2019*

**To start to find out, answer the following questions:**

**Do you have a family history of celiac disease or dermatitis herpetiformis?**

**Do you have recurring problems with:**

- Abdominal pain
- Bloating
- Constipation
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Elevated liver function tests (AST, ALT)
- Joint pain
- Fatigue
- Tingling or numbness in hands or feet
- An itchy skin rash occurring on both sides of the body, such as both elbows or knees
- Unexplained infertility or fetal loss
- In childhood, poor weight gain or failure to thrive
- In childhood, short stature or delayed puberty

**Have you been diagnosed with:**

- Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- Migraines
- Anemia (iron, folate or B-12 deficiency)
- Autoimmune thyroid disease (Hashimoto's thyroiditis or Graves disease)
- Type 1 Diabetes
- Osteoporosis or Osteopenia (low bone density)
- Osteomalacia (softening of bones)
- Arthritis
- Colitis (microscopic, lymphocytic or collagenous)
- Dental enamel defects in permanent teeth
- Peripheral neuropathy
- Liver disease
- Addison's disease
- IgA nephropathy
- Selective IgA deficiency
- Cerebellar ataxia
- Epilepsy
- Occipital calcifications
- Down Syndrome
- Turner Syndrome
- Williams Syndrome
- Sjogren's Syndrome

**What does it mean if I have some of these symptoms or conditions?**

The symptoms and conditions listed above occur more commonly in individuals with gluten-related disorders: either celiac disease or non-celiac gluten sensitivity (also known as gluten sensitivity). (Dermatitis Herpetiformis is a skin manifestation of celiac disease.) Many of these symptoms are also associated with other health conditions,

**Questions to ask your doctor:**

*If I have stopped eating gluten, how long do I need to be back on gluten before I can have the celiac blood tests?*

*What else can trigger dermatitis herpetiformis?*

*Should I take nutritional supplements?*

*Could I have associated food intolerances?*

*How can I find out about the diet?*

*How often should I follow up with the doctor?*

so their presence does not necessarily mean that a gluten-related disorder is the cause. However, if you have any of these symptoms or conditions, it would be a good idea to bring this to your doctor's attention and discuss having the screening blood tests for celiac disease. These tests are also a first step to diagnosing non-celiac gluten sensitivity.

The treatment for celiac disease and gluten sensitivity is to remove gluten from the diet. However, celiac specialists recommend that you not exclude gluten before you are tested as this will significantly reduce the chances of getting accurate results. Therefore it is important NOT to remove gluten from the diet before testing is done.

## What is Celiac Disease?

Celiac disease is an autoimmune reaction to the gluten protein found in wheat, rye and barley. The ingestion of gluten causes damage to the small intestine and other parts of the body, resulting in a wide range of possible symptoms. As celiac disease has a genetic component, chances of developing the condition are higher in first or second degree relatives of family member who have already been diagnosed. In addition, the likelihood of some other autoimmune conditions (included in list above) is increased.

## What is Gluten Sensitivity?

Some individuals who experience distress when eating gluten-containing foods and show improvement when following a gluten-free diet may have what is commonly referred to as gluten sensitivity instead of celiac disease.

Gluten sensitivity is not well understood, and it is still not clear whether other components of gluten-containing grains may be involved in causing symptoms, at least in some individuals. The symptoms seen in gluten sensitivity often resemble those that are associated with celiac disease.

### References:

-Catassi et al. Diagnosis of Non-Celiac Gluten Sensitivity (NCGS): The Salerno Experts Criteria. *Nutrients* 2015, 7(6), 4966-4977; doi:10.3390/nu7064966.

-North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition. Diagnosis and Treatment of Celiac Disease in Children. [www.naspgghan.org](http://www.naspgghan.org). Accessed July 11, 2017.

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-World Gastroenterology Organisation Global Guidelines, Celiac Disease. <http://www.worldgastroenterology.org/guidelines/global-guidelines/ceciac-disease/ceciac-disease-english>. Accessed July 11, 2017.

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Other helpful information is available at [www.GLUTEN.org](http://www.GLUTEN.org).

Advances in gluten-related disorders are fast-paced. If this document is more than 2 years old, please visit our website for updated documents.

This information should not be used to diagnose or treat gluten-related disorders or other medical conditions. For questions about these conditions consult your healthcare team when considering this information.

Please consider your local GIG support group as another resource.

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The Mission of the Gluten Intolerance Group is to empower the gluten-free community through consumer support, advocacy, and education.

To make a donation or become a volunteer to GIG, visit our website or call the office at 253-833-6655.