

Greenwich Hospital

Celiac Disease

PATIENT/FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

What is Celiac Disease?

Celiac disease, also called celiac sprue or gluten-sensitive enteropathy, is a disease of the small intestine that interferes with absorption of nutrients. While the cause of this inherited disease is unknown, it results from the body's own immune system damaging the lining of the intestine when gluten is eaten. This damage leads to poor absorption of nutrients and malnutrition. Gluten is a protein found in wheat, rye, barley and any foods or ingredients made from these grains.

What are the symptoms of celiac disease?

Symptoms of celiac disease vary greatly. Some individuals have no symptoms at all. One or more of the following symptoms may be present:

Gas	Fatigue	Muscle cramps	Delayed growth
Abdominal bloating and pain	Unexplained anemia	Tingling numbness in the legs	Failure to thrive in infants
Chronic diarrhea	Bone or joint pain	Seizures	Behavioral changes
Pale, foul-smelling, or fatty stool	Osteoporosis or osteopenia	Missed menstrual periods	Tooth discoloration or loss of enamel
Weight loss or weight gain	Ulcers inside the mouth	Infertility, recurrent miscarriage	Dermatitis herpetiformis, an itchy skin rash

How is celiac disease diagnosed?

Diagnosis of celiac disease can be difficult as it is frequently confused with other intestinal disorders, such as irritable bowel disease or

Crohn's disease. Your doctor can measure the levels of certain autoantibodies in your blood. If these tests and your symptoms suggest you have celiac disease, your physician may do a small intestine biopsy. This involves taking a piece of tissue from your intestine to look for the signs of celiac disease.

What is the treatment for celiac disease?

Celiac Disease can develop at any age. The only treatment for celiac disease is to omit all source of gluten from your diet. (See the Greenwich Hospital Patient/Family Information Sheet on the Gluten-Free Diet). This is life long dietary maintenance. In addition to the food sources of gluten, medicines, dietary supplements and cosmetics also need to be gluten-free. By following a gluten-free diet, the intestinal tract usually heals within 3 months to 2 years, depending upon the individual's age.

Who can help me with a gluten-free diet?

A Registered Dietitian can help you develop a gluten-free diet while also addressing increased need for nutrients, such as calcium, iron, and folic acid (a B vitamin).

How can I get more information?

If you have questions about your diet, you may call a Greenwich Hospital Registered Dietitian for an appointment at the following number: 203.863.3668.

Web Resources

- ❑ American Dietetic Association www.eatright.org PH: 800.877.1600.
- ❑ National Digestive Diseases Clearinghouse <http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/celiac/>
- ❑ Celiac Disease Foundation www.celiac.org

For more Patient Education Fact Sheets, see the Greenwich Hospital web site at www.greenhosp.org and click on Patients & Visitors, then Patient Education