



# Could Gluten Be Causing Your Health Problems?

GIG Education  
Bulletin

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## 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
- Loss of appetite
- Vomiting
- Unintended weight loss
- 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, folic acid or B-12 deficiency)
- Autoimmune thyroid disease (Hashimoto's thyroiditis or Graves disease)
- Osteoporosis or Osteopenia (low bone density)
- Osteomalacia (softening of bones)
- Arthritis
- Colitis (microscopic, lymphocytic or collagenous)
- Type 1 diabetes
- Dental enamel defects in permanent teeth
- Peripheral neuropathy
- Liver disease
- Sjogren's syndrome (causes dry eyes and dry mouth)
- Addison's disease
- IgA nephropathy
- Selective IgA deficiency
- Cerebellar ataxia
- Epilepsy
- Occipital calcifications
- Down syndrome
- Turner syndrome
- Williams syndrome

### *Questions to ask your doctor:*

*Should I have a blood test for celiac disease?*

*Why is a small intestine biopsy necessary if the blood test comes back positive?*

*If I have a skin rash, can I get a skin biopsy instead of a small intestine biopsy?*

*If I have celiac disease, should my family members be tested for celiac disease?*

*What if my blood tests are negative, could I still have gluten sensitivity?*

*How often should I be tested for celiac disease?*

*Is it helpful to have a genetic test done?*

*Will any of my health problems improve on a gluten-free diet?*

*What else could cause my health problems?*

*When should I see a dietitian who understands the gluten-free diet?*

## What is Celiac Disease?

Celiac Disease is an autoimmune reaction to the gluten protein found in wheat, rye and barley. Some people also react to oats. Celiac Disease causes damage to the small intestine and other parts of the body, resulting in a wide range of possible symptoms. Often, the connection with gluten is not recognized. For more information, go to the website of Gluten Intolerance Group at <http://gluten.net>

## What does it mean if I have some of the conditions?

This Educational Bulletin lists symptoms and conditions which put you at increased risk for having Celiac Disease. It is based solely on the current medical guidelines.

If you have even one of these conditions, it would be a good idea to bring that to your doctor's attention and discuss having the screening blood tests for Celiac Disease.

If you have multiple conditions, consider having the screening tests as soon as possible.

The treatment for Celiac Disease is to remove gluten from the diet. However, Celiac specialists recommend that you not exclude gluten before you are tested as this will lower the chances of getting accurate results.

If you have negative tests, but still feel that you have symptoms that might be related to gluten, see "Gluten Sensitivity" at <http://gluten.net/publications.php>.

The medical guidelines are available online; links are provided below.

### References:

*AGA Institute Medical Position Statement on the Diagnosis and Management of Celiac Disease. Gastroenterology. 2006 Dec;131(6):1977-80.*  
Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/5dmfkv>

*Guideline for the diagnosis and treatment of celiac disease in children: Recommendations of the North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition. Journal of Pediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition. 2005 Jan;40(1):1-19.*  
Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/yhbbhx4>

*World Gastroenterology Organisation Practice Guideline: Celiac Disease. Paris (France): World Gastroenterology Organisation; 2007, 18 p.*  
Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/ydfetkt>

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*Other documents like this one are available at [www.GLUTEN.net](http://www.GLUTEN.net).*

*Advances in celiac disease are fast-paced. If this document is more than 2 years old, please visit our Web site for updated documents.*

*This information should not be used to diagnose or treat celiac disease. See your health care team for diagnosis and treatment options specifically for you.*

### Contact your Local Support Group:

**Gluten Intolerance Group (GIG) of North America®**  
31214 – 124 Ave SE  
Auburn, WA 98092-3667

**Phone: 253-833-6655**  
**Fax: 253-833-6675**

[www.GLUTEN.net](http://www.GLUTEN.net)  
[info@GLUTEN.net](mailto:info@GLUTEN.net)

*GIG is a nonprofit 501c3 national organization providing support for persons with gluten intolerances, in order to live healthy, productive lives. GIG Branches provide support at a local level.*

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