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Go Gluten-Free

Celiac disease, also known as gluten intolerance, affects approximately 1 in every 133 people, the estimated total in the United States being around two million. The medical community previously thought that it was only a rare childhood ailment. In 2003 the National Institutes of Health sponsored the first study to determine the disease's impact on the U.S. population. Results from that study say 1 in 133 (from testing 13,000 blood samples) have gluten intolerance. But this is the first medical study, and as the medical community goes, additional studies are required to obtain more accurate data. The ratio can very well be more than 1 in 133.

It's a genetic disorder in which the body doesn't produce certain enzymes to break down gluten proteins found in wheat, barley and rye. Oats have been long believed to contain gluten, but some studies have shown otherwise. With ongoing research in this field, it is still too early to determine solid conclusions.

There is no known cure for gluten intolerance, and the only way to avoid reactions for is to avoid gluten containing foods all their lives.

Gluten intolerances occur mostly in people of European descent, more specifically northern European. However, intolerance has been found in people of Asian, Black and Hispanic cultures as well.

Gluten is a mixture of insoluble plant proteins that occur in the four aforementioned grains. The word itself, *gluten*, is Latin for "glue." The proteins are cohesive, giving bread dough its stickiness. Gluten is also used in many adhesives as well as the popular children's toy Play-Doh®.

When gluten passes into the body, the

body's own immune system attacks the intestinal lining of a gluten intolerant person, destroying the tiny villi that normally protrude from the intestinal surfaces to absorb nutrients from food. Without the ability to absorb water and food nutrients, the body is susceptible to other conditions related to malnutrition.

Because of the damage to the villi, people with gluten intolerance may also have intolerance to lactose.

Gluten intolerance is not the same as wheat allergies. Some people with wheat allergies are not intolerant to rye, barley and wheat.

There is no medically definitive way to diagnose gluten intolerance other than a biopsy, which we do not recommend. Doctors generally diagnose an intolerance based on the symptoms, which vary widely and some are even difficult to detect. Because of the variety of symptoms, celiac disease is easy to misdiagnose. But you can avoid a biopsy by performing your own "muscle tests" with different grains and see to which ones you may have an allergy. You can also use a computron or other accurate energy frequency devices that have consistent results.

The classic features range from diarrhea, severe gas, bloating and abdominal pain. More serious symptoms include chronic diarrhea and progressive weight loss. If left untreated, malnutrition can occur. Without proper nutrition, the body cannot perform needed functions and can ultimately be life-threatening.

Some symptoms don't even involve the digestive system. Gluten intolerance reactions can manifest as irritability, depression, muscle cramps, joint and bone pain, fatigue, menstrual irregularities and more.

Other symptoms can include sinus headaches, osteoporosis, infertility, seizures

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(epilepsy), diarrhea, multiple sclerosis, Crohn's disease, allergies, water retention, skin disorders, depression, neurological disorders, muscle disorders, chronic neck and spinal tension, subluxation, cancer (a minimum of seven times higher risk), diabetes, Lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, gastric problems, snoring, sleeping disorders, bloating, digestive issues and many more.

If someone has the disorder and continues consuming gluten, he or she increases the risk of getting gastrointestinal cancer by a factor of 40 to 100 times than that of a person without gluten intolerance.

The current acceptable treatment for gluten intolerance is simply a gluten-free diet. A strict adherence to a gluten-free diet can prevent almost all complications caused by the disorder.

Reading product food labels and inquiring about the ingredients of certain dishes is important. Foods labeled wheat-free aren't necessarily gluten-free.

Breads and cereals are obvious foods to avoid. However, gluten can be found as a thickening agent in other foods such as certain canned soups, catsups, mustards, soy sauce and other condiments. Because of gluten's stickiness, it can also be found in certain meat products, such as sausage, hamburgers and meatballs.

Over the past few months, Dr. King has recommended for many of his clients, both medically diagnosed with celiac disease and those who have not, to avoid gluten containing foods. The results have been subtle in some and overwhelming in others. Some people going on gluten-free diets are reporting anything from better digestion to fewer hot flashes in women going through menopause. Others are reporting better mental function, fewer seizure symptoms, and more.

The good news is that it can be controlled by strict diet. The bad news is that gluten is everywhere, being second only to sugar as the most commonly consumed ingredient in the American diet. Someone with celiac disease has to be a dedicated detective to check everything, which includes calling manufacturers. If a product is processed in the same manufacturing plant where gluten products are processed, then you run the risk of a reaction to your villi and affecting your health. And it can take an average of two years in adults for the villi to recover on a completely gluten-free diet.

The American diet has ingrained (no pun intended) it into our brains that a majority

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of our meals should consist of gluten containing foods, especially grains and cereals. The ratio of grains to other foods in most of our diets is somewhere around 90 to 10. However, nutritionally speaking, it should be the opposite.

Even if you aren't gluten intolerant, gluten is still a gluey substance that sticks to the villi in your small intestine where

you absorb your nutrients.

It's safe to say that a person without gluten intolerance or grain allergies can devote about 10 percent of his diet to gluten-containing foods without any problems, but no more than that.

So whether you have celiac disease or not, it's good to go gluten-free. 🍌