



Information for You from Your Health Care Team

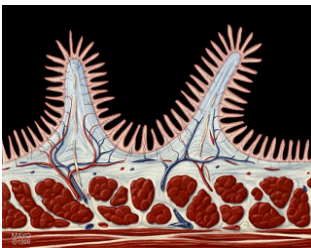
Celiac Disease

What is it?

Celiac disease also called celiac sprue is an illness that affects the digestive system. Your child's small intestine becomes irritated and swollen because it is sensitive to gluten in the foods they eat. Gluten is found in foods that contain wheat, barley, rye, and oats. Celiac is something your child will have forever. A special gluten free diet helps make the symptoms better. There will be information about that later on.

What happens?

When your child eats foods with gluten such as wheat, barley, rye, and oats the immune system reacts causing swelling in the digestive system. The swelling can damage a part of the small intestine called the villi. The villi look like fingers lining the small intestine. Their job is to help take up nutrients from food. With celiac these villi are damaged, so your child is not getting all the nutrition needed for growth and development.



What are the symptoms?

Celiac disease affects children in different ways. These are possible symptoms

- Chronic diarrhea
- Weight loss
- Belly pain
- Gas
- Pale foul smelling stools
- Anemia with no cause
- Muscle cramps or bone pain
- Joint pain
- Poor growth
- Bulky stools
- Bloating belly

- Irritability
- Weakness
- Tooth discoloration
- Painful skin rash
- Feeling tired

Not all children with celiac have all or any of these symptoms. Children who have had celiac for a long time and have not had it treated can have some problems when they grow up such as brittle bones and anemia.

What causes celiac disease?

Celiac disease is a genetic disease that runs in families. It is very common. Sometimes a child can have it but not know until it is triggered by stress, surgery, injury or infection.

How is celiac diagnosed?

- Complete history and physical
- Blood work to measure antibodies to gluten
- Biopsy of a tiny piece of intestine is used to make the final diagnosis

How is celiac treated?

At this time the only known treatment is life long total avoidance of gluten containing foods. Most people who follow a gluten free meal plan begin to feel better very quickly. Your child's small intestine will begin to heal and absorb nutrients from food within 3 to 6 days. Even though your child's symptoms will go away it can take from 3 months to 2 years for a complete recovery.

Myths about celiac disease:

Myth: Celiac is a disease of childhood

Fact: Celiac can be diagnosed for the first time in young adults, middle adults or seniors

Myth: Celiac disease can be outgrown

Fact: Celiac disease is a lifelong condition

Myth: Celiac disease can be diagnosed by a simple blood test

Fact: Biopsy of the intestine is the only way to diagnose celiac

Myth: A person with celiac can have a small amount of gluten

Fact: Any amount of gluten can cause serious damage to the intestines

Speak up if you have any questions or concerns

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