

## Gluten Intolerance Group of Southcentral PA

717-520-9817

Email: [SouthcentralPA@gluten.net](mailto:SouthcentralPA@gluten.net)

[www.GIGsouthcentralPA.org](http://www.GIGsouthcentralPA.org)

### What are gluten sensitivities and how do you diagnose them?

#### Objective is:

- To explain the different gluten sensitivities and diagnostic testing in lay terms.
- And to answer questions that are still causing you concern.

First of all gluten is a protein in wheat, barley and rye, but not in oats. Those with CD only eat certified gluten-free oats due to cross contamination with wheat during harvesting and production.

There are 3 reactions to wheat: Celiac Disease, non-celiac gluten intolerance and wheat allergy.

#### Gluten Sensitivities:

- 1) Celiac Disease and Dermatitis Herpetiformis (skin manifestation of CD) affects approximately 3 Million people in the U.S.
  - It is an autoimmune delayed response with a T-cell reaction. A T-cell is a white blood cell that plays a key role in immunity response. (Delay is usually 30 minutes-72 hours after eating gluten.)
  - Gluten arrives in the small intestine along the lining of the villi for processing. But the body sees the gluten as a toxin and activates an immune response and is grabbed by antibodies.

- The antibodies attract immune T-cells that lock together and release chemicals that wear down the surface of the villi, which causes malabsorption of nutrients, which cause a variety of symptoms throughout the body.
- In addition many with CD have an intestinal barrier dysfunction better known as leaky gut which allows these T-cells to circulate and distribute chemicals throughout the body. Therefore CD is a disease that affects the entire body not just the gut. Good examples are headaches & migraines; and neurological problems with nerve pain, numbness, and balance problems; and anxiety and depression (*Malabsorption of Tryptophan which is necessary for the body's production of serotonin which regulates mood and anxiety.*)
- The reason why the immune system dysfunctions is not well understood. Probably a combination of genetic and environmental factors. Bacteria, viruses, and toxins can sometimes trigger an autoimmune disease in someone who carries a genetic predisposition for it.
  - For accurate testing, you must be on gluten for all antibody blood tests to be accurate.
  - All lab tests, regardless of the type or source, are aids in diagnoses; not a definitive answer.
  - The blood test for CD checks for levels of tTG-IgA (transglutaminase) and tTG-IgG antibodies and now a new antibody test -- deamidated gliadin peptide. All these antibodies are found in the gut. The reason sometimes for a negative test is that the disease is not advanced enough for the antibodies to show up in the blood. New saliva tests are available showing great promise in identifying antibodies from the intestinal tract.
  - In addition the Total IgA serum test is ordered because 3% of CD patients are IgA deficient, so if deficient, the doctor would need to focus on the IgG results.
  - The gene tests (DQ2 and DQ8) are often ordered because a CD patient has one or both of these genes. No gene/no CD. No need to be eating gluten (because not testing for antibodies against gluten). Please check with your insurance provider to make sure this is a covered expense.

## 2) Wheat (gluten) Allergy

- Allergy is an immediate IgE antibody or histamine reaction with no intestinal damage, such as itchy skin, watering eyes, sneezing, breathing problems, swollen tongue and/or lips, etc.
- Has a potential of a life-threatening reaction – like antiphalactic shock to peanuts.
- The top 8 allergens are now required to be listed on product labels – shellfish, fin fish, eggs, soy, dairy, wheat, tree nuts and peanuts. Note: barley and rye are not included – check the ingredient list.
  - Testing is usually allergy skin and blood tests for IgE.
  - Also elimination diet helps identify allergy.

## 3) Non-Celiac Gluten Intolerance which is approximately 18-20 million people.

- Shares some of the same symptoms as CD but at this time doctors state there is no gut damage.
- There are intolerances to many food items, not just gluten, such as lactose, sulfites, etc. This is an irritant and not deadly.
  - The blood test for gluten intolerance checks the levels of IgA and IgG gliadin antibodies.
  - Also elimination diet helps to identify.

It is recommended to do the entire panel of tests for Non-Celiac Gluten Intolerance and CD at the same time to rule out both at once.

## Symptoms possible in all 3 gluten sensitivities:

- **GI** -IBS, indigestion, abdominal pain, bloating, nausea, vomiting, constipation, and diarrhea
- **Systemic** -fever, fatigue, sweating, and chills
- **Lungs** -food-induced bronchitis and asthma, sneezing, runny nose, and shortness of breath
- **Joints** -food related arthritis
- **Muscles and connective tissue** -pain, stiffness, and swelling
- **Skin** -itching, rashes, hives, redness, swelling, and scaling as in eczema and psoriasis
- **Brain** -disorganized, disturbed or foggy thinking, constant headaches, migraines.

Other possible related health problems: Schizophrenia, anxiety, Autism Spectrum Disorders (ADHD, ADD included),

Other autoimmune diseases that sometimes occur with CD are MS, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Lupus, Type I Diabetes, Gluten Ataxia (balance), just to name a few.

### **Importance of correct diagnosis:**

- Those who self-diagnose as non-celiac gluten intolerant are not compliant with the diet. In other words they sneak regular gluten cookies now and then.
- Actually they could have celiac disease with more significant body damage and must be 100% compliant.
- There are those who are Silent Celiacs with no gut symptoms who have no idea as to what is causing their other symptoms.
- **So very important to get the correct diagnosis. In fact more are not being diagnosed over the age of 50.**

### **Treatment:**

- Stay compliant in following the GF diet – remember these are entire body problem including things you can't see.
- Include support groups or social network in your life – proven that those who do this stay compliant with the diet.
- Seek help of an informed dietitian.
- Educate yourself to improve the quality of your life.
  - GIG has resources on the website that you can print out. [www.gluten.net](http://www.gluten.net)
  - Keep up-to-date on the latest developments and news

- Practical Gastro series is a great resource
- NIH has information on their website [www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov)
- Educate your doctors – take article in.....

**Summary: Be sure to get the correct diagnosis and stay compliant on the diet, and you will be one of the healthier people on this planet.**

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