

Determining Celiac Sprue and Gluten Intolerance by Alexis Touyz

So what exactly is gluten intolerance? Well if you eat products with gluten in them and get a stomach ache or gas, coming out both directions, it's more than likely you have some degree of gluten sensitivity.

So what is Gluten? It is the sticky protein found in foods like wheat, barley oats. It gives food its chewy quality. Gluten consists of 2 proteins; gliadin and glutenin. Rice and corn lack the protein gliadin. In celiac disease a person's immune system is abnormally activated by the gliadi protein.

If you have Celiac Disease you suffer an 'immunologic ally toxic reaction' to gluten and that interferes with nutrient absorption as damage is done to the tissue in the intestines i.e. the cilia. The cilia are the specialized cells in the intestine which by increasing surface area increase the absorptive function of the intestine. This damage limits the ability to absorb essential nutrients and the body is adversely affected.

Symptoms can start as early as the introduction of grain into the diet. If the stools are pale foamy and have a distinctly unpleasant odor, this indicates a reaction to gluten. Some children outgrow this reaction some don't. Another indication is a condition called Dermatitis Herpetiformis, a skin disease in which little blistery bumps form around the folds of the body, and on the inside of elbows and knees.

A key factor when considering infants and children is the idea of failure to thrive. If your child is growing poorly and suffers regular vomiting and diarrhea Celiac Sprue is a consideration

Symptoms like irritability, vomiting, loss of appetite, fatigue and lethargy are seen. Depression is also common. Other Symptoms include fatty stool, canker sores, anemia, bleeding gums, porous bones, weight loss and swollen legs.

A biopsy of small intestinal tissue is the way to confirm a celiac sprue diagnosis. However answering these questions (1) will give a good indication as to the severity of gluten intolerance and /or the likely hood of celiac sprue:

1. Scotch, English or Scandinavian ancestry
2. Family history or personal history of intestinal disease
3. Has there ever been a blistery rash on arms, knees or other bodily folds
4. Do you have a swollen abdomen?
5. Do you have severe fatigue?
6. Do you have diarrhea/ constipation regularly?
7. Is there a history of stunted growth?

It is essential to switch your diet. Gluten is a specific trigger and the consequence is the flattening of the villi in the intestine. This alters gut permeability and affects the absorption of nutrients.

A lactose free, low fiber diet which avoids fatty foods is helpful.

Foods to avoid

All wheat, Durham, semolina Spelt Kamut Einkorn Faro Rye Barley.

In other word avoid all bread, pasta whole wheat, bran pizza oatmeal spaghetti, croutons, crackers pastries bagels, beer and fast foods. There are many varieties of alternative foods available. In today's modern world most of the foods mentioned earlier are available in a gluten free form. Foods like Rice, potatoes, corn Legumes Millet peas are great whole food choices.

Furthermore avoid foods with unidentified food starch, Caramel coloring, Modified starch, 'natural flavors' or spice extracts, liquorices, vegetable gum and MSG as the binding agent could well contain gluten.

Also check cosmetics, stamps and over the counter medication.

Supplements are recommended to replace lost nutrients

Vitamin C 1000mg daily

Vitamin E 400 IU daily

Beta Carotene 10 000 IU daily

Calcium 1000mg daily

Magnesium 4000mg daily

Iron 60mg daily

Herbal teas can be invaluable for their astringent and mucilaginous qualities. Astringent herbs will gently help quell inflammation. Mucilaginous herbs help with coating the mucosa. The anti bacterial and adaptogenic properties help in speeding up healing of the digestive tract. Herbs like Gotu kola, Comfrey, Althea, Ulmus and Yarrow are good examples. Herbal Bitters are excellent digestive aids and are an excellent added supplement.

Homeopathic constitutional care gives the immune system the best ability to cope with physical challenges and maintains the body in its most optimum form. Sensitivities are better controlled and reactions lessened by degree.

References

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2. Surviving Celiac Disease: What you need to know about gluten free diets, Sara Hoyness, September 2006

3. Celiac disease foundation (1)
4. Alternative Medicine and Health.com