

Celiac Disease (Gluten Intolerance)

What is celiac disease?

Celiac disease is an autoimmune disease that occurs when the body's immune system (infection-fighting system) mistakenly attacks and destroys the lining of the small intestines when you eat gluten. Gluten is a protein that is found in foods that contain wheat, rye, and barley. The destruction reduces the area available for absorbing necessary nutrients.

Who is more likely to get it?

You are more likely to have celiac disease if you have:

- A 1st or 2nd degree family member with celiac disease
- Type 1 diabetes
- Autoimmune thyroid disease
- Down syndrome
- Turner syndrome
- Pulmonary hemosiderosis

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of celiac disease can be different in each person.

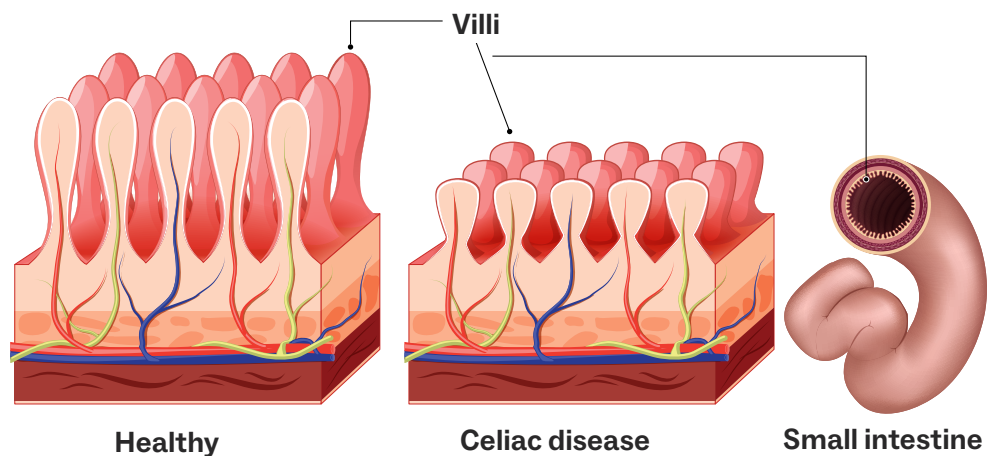
Digestive symptoms include:

- Abdominal pain
- Bloating and gas
- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Foul smelling, greasy stools
- Weight loss (not always)

Non-digestive symptoms include:

- Fatigue
- Migraines and headaches
- Joint pain
- Early osteoporosis
- Mouth ulcers
- Itchy skin or rash
- Infertility
- Vitamin deficiencies (B12, folate)
- Iron-deficiency anemia
- Elevated liver enzymes

Villi: Small hair-like projections in the small intestine that help the body absorb nutrients. Damage to the villi can make it hard for the body to get enough nutrients from food.



How is it diagnosed?

Celiac disease is diagnosed with blood tests. The results of the test may need to be confirmed with a biopsy of the small intestine. A biopsy is done during a procedure called an **endoscopy**.

How is it treated?

The only treatment for celiac disease is to eat a gluten-free diet. Removing gluten from your diet allows the intestines to heal. Healing time is different for each person.

You or your child will have to stay on the gluten-free diet even after you feel well. Eating gluten can:

- Damage the small intestine.
- Cause nutrient deficiencies and malnutrition.
- Keep the immune system from working properly and makes it hard for the body to fight infections.
- Slow your child's growth.

Health maintenance tips

- Get regular antibody titers to ensure no gluten exposure
- Have your nutrition labs checked routinely: Vitamin A, Vitamin E, Vitamin D, Vitamin B12, Folate, Iron, Calcium
- Get periodic DEXA scans to check for bone loss (osteopenia or osteoporosis)

What are the risks of uncontrolled celiac disease?

- Increased risk of lymphoma (3 times more likely in patients without mucosal healing) and intestinal adenocarcinoma
- Nutritional deficiencies
- Osteoporosis
- Reproductive complications
- Increased risk of infection

Tips for living with celiac disease

- Read all food labels! Look for “**Certified Gluten-free.**”
- Cross contamination matters.

How to avoid cross contamination?

- Wash pans, counters, and utensils thoroughly.
- Use separate cutting boards.
- Use a separate toaster or use toaster bags.
- Keep regular flour away from shared kitchen spaces.
- Check all labels for hidden gluten.

Ask your provider for a copy of the Intermountain booklet **Eating Gluten Free: A Guide for Kids, Adults, and Families**.

This guide will help you learn which foods to avoid, how to cook without gluten, and to eat out safely.



Where can I learn more?

- Celiac.org
- Beyondceliac.org
- Nationalceliac.org