

NEUROLOGICAL SYMPTOMS

Laura, 39



ANAEMIA

Kevin, 68



STOMACH PAIN

Rocco, 12



COELIAC DISEASE IS DIFFERENT FOR EVERYONE

WHAT IS COELIAC DISEASE?

Coeliac disease (pronounced see-liac) is a serious autoimmune condition where the body's immune system reacts to gluten. When someone has coeliac disease, their body's reaction to gluten causes damage to the lining of the gut (villi), the place where food and nutrients are absorbed. Coeliac disease is not an allergy or food intolerance and the only treatment is a strict gluten free diet for life.

Coeliac disease affects 1 in 100 people in the UK, but only 36% of them are diagnosed, leaving an estimated 500,000 living with unexplained symptoms. Coeliac disease is a genetically linked condition, and if a first degree family member (parent, sibling or child) has coeliac disease, the chances of having the condition increase to 1 in 10 so it's recommended that once one person is diagnosed, the rest of the immediate family is also tested.

WHAT IS GLUTEN?

Gluten is a protein found in wheat, barley and rye. It is found in foods like bread and pasta but also in products such as sauces, beers and other processed items.

If any product contains a gluten containing ingredient it must be highlighted within the ingredients list. It is important to note that for a product to be legally labelled as gluten free it must have no more than 20 ppm (parts per million) of gluten, this level has been determined as suitable for people with coeliac disease.

Some people with coeliac disease may also be sensitive to gluten free oats, which contain a similar protein to gluten called avenin.

Tiny amounts of gluten may cause people with coeliac disease to experience symptoms in the short term, and gut damage long term. Avoid cross contamination by being careful at home when cooking for example using different butter knives to prevent breadcrumbs from getting into condiments or using clean oil or a separate fryer for frying gluten free foods.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Coeliac disease is different for everyone, and people often report a wide range of symptoms including:

PERSISTENT MOUTH ULCERS

Karen, 64



RECURRENT MISCARRIAGE

Charlene, 30



EXTREME FATIGUE

Ben, 30



SICKNESS

Frankie, 6



SLOW GROWTH IN CHILDREN

NAUSEA, FEELING SICK AND VOMITING

CONSTIPATION OR HARD STOOLS

EXTREME FATIGUE

NEUROLOGICAL SYMPTOMS

ANAEMIA

STOMACH PAIN AND CRAMPING

FREQUENT BOUTS OF DIARRHOEA

LOTS OF GAS AND BLOATING

SUBFERTILITY AND RECURRENT MISCARRIAGE

PERSISTENT MOUTH ULCERS



HOW DO I GO ABOUT GETTING DIAGNOSED?

If you or someone you know is experiencing any of these unexplained symptoms, the first step to getting diagnosed with coeliac disease is to speak with your GP surgery to gain access to a simple blood test. To help facilitate this we have created a quick online self-assessment that will confirm if you should speak to your healthcare professional about being tested – it even gives you a letter to take to your GP.

The blood test looks for the antibodies produced by people with coeliac disease when they eat gluten. It is essential to keep eating gluten before and throughout the testing process, otherwise the body won't produce antibodies, and this can increase the likelihood of a false negative result.

You can find the self-assessment on our website www.isitcoeliacdisease.org.uk



Gluten must be eaten in more than one meal every day for six weeks before testing.

If the blood test shows you have high levels of antibodies, you will still need to be referred but in some cases, you may be diagnosed without the need for endoscopy and biopsy.

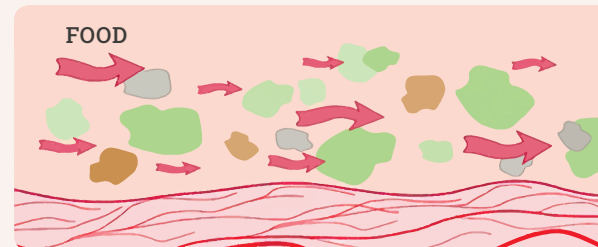
An endoscopy involves a camera being passed through the mouth and stomach, then into the small bowel. Samples of the small bowel lining are collected and looked at for signs of coeliac disease.

Healthy gut



A healthy gut showing finger like projections (villi) that allow the body to absorb nutrients from food into the blood.

Gut damaged by coeliac disease



A damaged gut showing the villi are flattened meaning the body can't absorb nutrients from food properly.

WHAT'S THE TREATMENT FOR COELIAC DISEASE?

Currently, the only treatment for coeliac disease is a strict gluten free diet for life. Once gluten has been removed from the diet, the gut will begin to heal and symptoms will usually improve in a few weeks, although everyone is different and in some cases it can take longer.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I GET A DIAGNOSIS?

If you get a diagnosis of coeliac disease then do not panic! The words 'lifelong autoimmune disease' sound very scary but with the right changes to your diet it can be managed and most people live without symptoms once their gut has healed.

There is a pathway that your healthcare professionals will follow:

- 1 Confirmation of diagnosis by the gastroenterologist
- 2 Referral to a dietitian to help plan your gluten free diet
- 3 Annual check up to make sure you're supported and kept up to date with any new developments in managing your condition

From the moment of official diagnosis, you will be advised to avoid gluten and to learn about how to read labels and avoid cross contamination. There is lots of information, support and advice on the Coeliac UK website and we also have helpful tools like the Coeliac UK Live Well Gluten Free app.

coeliacuk
live well **gluten free**

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www.coeliac.org.uk