

CDF's Fast Facts: ICDS 2013

Celiac Disease Myths Debunked

As Discussed by CDF Medical Advisory Board Members Drs. Stefano Guandalini, Don Kasarda and John Zone With Dr. Markhu Maki, Melinda Dennis, RD and Andrea Levario

I had the blood test and it showed positive for celiac disease, am I diagnosed?



The blood test is only the first step of a celiac disease diagnosis. A biopsy is needed to determine if you do have celiac disease. Regular follow-up care with a physician is also necessary after diagnosis to assure you are healing on the gluten-free diet.

What is non-celiac gluten sensitivity?

Non-celiac gluten sensitivity is still undefined. Until researchers learn more about it, it cannot be properly diagnosed, nor can it be confirmed how many suffer from it. For now, if you do not have celiac disease or wheat allergy and have symptom improvement on a gluten-free diet you may be considered to have non-celiac gluten sensitivity.

Does gluten make you fat?

Gluten itself does not make us fat, lifestyle choices do. Wheat has not been genetically modified to make us fat. It is the number of calories we consume that makes us fat.



Will I lose weight on the gluten-free diet?

No. Most people with celiac disease actually gain weight when their intestinal tract begins to heal since they can absorb nutrients again. The combination of better absorption, and supplementing gluten-free foods, with their gluten-containing counterparts tends to result in weight gain.

Are people with celiac disease always skinny?

No. 40% of people diagnosed with celiac are overweight at their time of diagnosis. Only 4-5% are underweight.

What is 20 parts per million (ppm) of gluten, and how much gluten-free food can I eat without getting sick?

20 ppm of gluten is the amount of gluten the FDA allows in a product labeled gluten-free. According to the latest research, ingesting 50 mg of gluten per day causes intestinal damage for people with celiac disease. That means you must eat at least **5 pounds** of gluten-free food (with <20ppm of gluten) per day for damage to occur.



Is it OK to work in a bakery, if I'm not eating anything?



Breathing in gluten is similar to ingesting it. Although the flour cannot be absorbed through the skin, it can be "breathed in." Working in a bakery, unless it is a gluten-free bakery, is not the best job for those with celiac disease.

Is my child's school required to provide him a gluten-free lunch?

Yes. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), schools are required to provide students with celiac disease and other food allergies safe and nutritional food options. However, they are not required to provide meals equivalent to those served to other students. For children with a 504 plan (those with a documented disability), the school must provide lunch in addition to a classroom management plan.



Do I have to give up coffee and corn on a gluten-free diet?

No, coffee and corn are both gluten-free. There is no scientific evidence to show they contain cross-reacting proteins with gluten. According to Dr. Stefano Guandalini, CDF Medical Advisory Board Member, both are safe for people with celiac disease to consume.

Will glutenase and other "gluten-cutter" products help those with celiac disease digest gluten?

No! Products such as glutenase containing DPP-IV **DO NOT** help digest gluten. There is NO scientific evidence for this. Please save your money.

Do I have to use special gluten-free soaps, shampoos and lotions if I have celiac disease? Can gluten be absorbed through the skin?

No. Gluten **cannot** be absorbed through your scalp or skin! It must be ingested to affect those with celiac disease. Lipstick and lip products should be gluten-free as they are easily ingested.

