

Celiac Disease (Gluten Intolerance)

What is celiac disease?

Celiac disease is a condition in which eating gluten (a protein found in foods that contain wheat, rye, and barley) causes symptoms. Celiac disease is an **autoimmune disease** that is hereditary (runs in the family).

An autoimmune disease is a condition that occurs when the body's immune system (infection-fighting system) mistakenly attacks and destroys the body's tissue. In celiac disease, gluten causes a reaction that destroys the lining of the small intestines. This reduces the area for absorbing virtually all nutrients.

There is a separate and different condition known as gluten sensitivity.

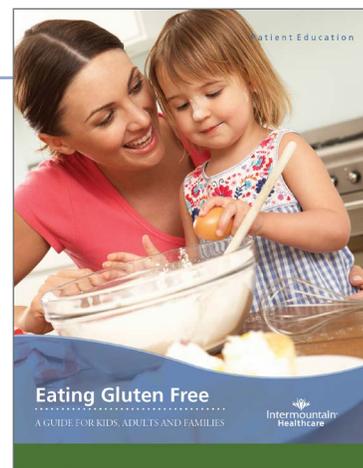
What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of celiac disease can be different in each person. Common symptoms are:

- Diarrhea or constipation
- Vomiting and weight loss
- Malnutrition
- Anemia (low levels of red blood cells)
- Tiredness or fatigue
- Bone or joint pain
- Depression
- Stomach bloating and pain
- Short stature in children

People who suffer from irritable bowel-like stomach problems, headaches, fatigue, numbness, and depression may have gluten sensitivity. People with gluten intolerance may also have itchy skin and skin eruptions, a condition called **dermatitis herpetiformis**.

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.



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**.

At present there is no test or a defined set of symptoms to diagnose gluten sensitivity.

How is it treated?

The treatment for celiac disease or gluten intolerance 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

