



# What is Celiac Disease?

Celiac disease is an autoimmune disease that damages the small intestine. What does this mean? Put simply, that the body is attacking itself!

Celiac disease is triggered by eating gluten, which is found in wheat, barley and rye. When people with celiac disease eat foods that contain gluten, their immune system responds by damaging their small intestine. This damage can prevent the body from absorbing nutrients from food and can cause serious problems throughout the body, including other autoimmune diseases, bone density loss, and cancer.

While someone is born with the possibility of having celiac disease, it doesn't always start in childhood. Celiac disease can also begin in adults and can be triggered by events such as surgery, pregnancy, childbirth, viral infection, or severe emotional stress.

About one out of every 133 Americans has celiac disease, but 97% remain undiagnosed. This means that almost three million Americans have celiac disease and only about 100,000 know they have it.

## What are the symptoms?

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The symptoms of celiac disease can be different for different people and can start at any age.

### Some of the most common symptoms of celiac disease include:

- Bloating
- Gas
- Diarrhea
- Constipation
- Fatigue
- Itchy Skin Rash
- Tingling/Numbness
- Headache
- Pale Mouth Sores
- Joint Pain
- Delayed Growth
- Poor Weight Gain
- Thin Bones
- Infertility
- Depression
- Discolored Teeth

## What is the treatment?

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The only treatment for celiac disease is a lifelong gluten-free diet. A gluten-free diet means avoiding all foods that contain wheat, rye, and barley.

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## Gluten in Medication

People with celiac disease also have to be careful about gluten in medicine. Gluten is used in many medications to bind pills together. So it is important for people with celiac disease to check with the manufacturer to be sure that the medicine you are taking is indeed gluten-free. Unfortunately, this isn't easy because right now there are no requirements for sources of gluten to be listed on the medication label.

### Resources for checking if your medication contains gluten

#### Manufacturers

Contact the company that makes your drugs, or ask your pharmacist to do so.

#### On the Web

[www.glutenfreedrugs.com](http://www.glutenfreedrugs.com)

#### In Print

*A Guide through the Medicine Cabinet*

A book developed to give those who suffer with celiac disease the tools to choose medications and supplements that meet special dietary requirements.



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[www.celiaccentral.org](http://www.celiaccentral.org)

For more information about celiac disease, visit [www.CeliacCentral.org](http://www.CeliacCentral.org)

For more information about the safe use of medicine, visit  
[www.SafeMedication.com](http://www.SafeMedication.com)



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Information provided by the **National Foundation for Celiac Awareness**  
and the **American Society of Health-System Pharmacists**.