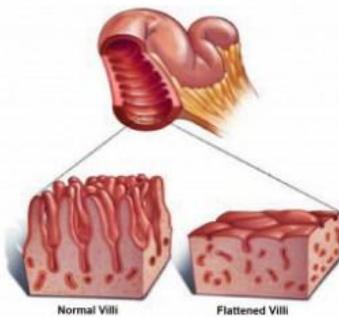


Who Should Avoid Gluten?

Pizza, cookies, cakes and pasta all contain one common ingredient – gluten. Gluten, meaning “glue” in Latin, is a protein found in wheat, barley and rye. The protein helps to bind breads, pasta and desserts to create a denser product. Recently, the gluten-avoidance ‘phenomenon’ has become increasingly popular and the newest diet fad. However, avoiding this sometimes troublesome protein may not be entirely necessary for everyone.



Flattened villi caused by celiac disease

Celiac Disease

In the past few decades, more people have begun to notice that consuming bread products which contain gluten have been related to gastrointestinal issues such as nausea, stomach pains, diarrhea, and in more severe cases – vomiting and progressive weight loss. Medical professionals discovered this is sometimes due to an autoimmune condition known as **celiac disease**. What happens to those with celiac disease is a progressive deterioration of the villi, or hair-like projections, within the small intestine – caused by a gluten-triggered reaction. Villi help to absorb vitamins and nutrients to nourish our bodies and sustain energy for our everyday activities. When these villi begin to flatten as a result of gluten consumption, malabsorption can occur – causing anemia, irritability, weight loss, stomach pains and other gastrointestinal complications.

Although there is no cure for celiac disease, one may adhere to a gluten-free diet to slowly reverse damage to the small intestine. A gluten-free diet eliminates all forms of barley, wheat and rye – even in the smallest amounts.

Diagnosis & Symptoms

There are a few ways doctors diagnose celiac disease – a biopsy of the small intestine; an endoscopy to view images of the villi; or a blood test to measure amounts of certain antibodies which are commonly elevated when reactive to gluten. Although these diagnostic measures are available – many people still choose to self-diagnose and take the route to avoid all forms of gluten within their diet. The problem with this approach is that there are similar symptoms with celiac disease and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Both conditions may cause mild to moderate gastrointestinal complications. Therefore, some may mistakenly follow a gluten-free diet which is not necessary for relieving their symptoms. Some, however, are *gluten-sensitive*, and this can be difficult to diagnose. Elimination diets and food journaling can help reveal whether such a sensitivity exists.

Celiac-Specific symptoms

- Anemia
- Skin rash
- Mouth sores
- Dental & bone disorders
- Tingling in legs and feet

Shared Symptoms

- Diarrhea
- Bloating
- Muscle cramps
- Flatulence
- constipation

IBS-Specific Symptoms

- Mucus in the stool