



How Common is Celiac Disease?

Celiac disease is a serious autoimmune disorder that damages the small intestine. People with celiac disease cannot process gluten, a protein found in grains such as wheat, barley, and rye. Even tiny amounts of these grains can cause a flare-up of symptoms such as abdominal pain and diarrhea and damage to the small intestine. Over time, if undiagnosed and untreated, celiac disease can cause long-term digestive problems and the development of other autoimmune disorders such as multiple sclerosis and Type I diabetes, anemia, osteoporosis, skin rashes, fatigue, joint pain, nutritional deficiencies, and other conditions.

It is estimated that approximately 1%, or [3 million Americans have celiac disease](#) and most are undiagnosed. The symptoms of celiac disease can be minor or vague, or mimic the symptoms of other digestive disorders such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). For this reason, many people with celiac disease are unaware that they have it. Children and teens with celiac disease may exhibit behavioral problems and be misdiagnosed with depression or an attention deficit disorder. The average time for a positive diagnosis of celiac disease is 4 to 9 years.

Celiac disease may be diagnosed with bloodwork that can identify certain antibodies associated with the disease, an intestinal biopsy, family and medical history, and genetic tests. Celiac disease can be inherited, although not everyone who carries the gene develops the disease. It may appear early or later in life, possibly triggered by environmental, physical, or psychological stressors.



Living with Celiac Disease

Currently the only effective treatment for celiac disease is a gluten-free diet, which allows the small intestine to heal and prevents further damage.

Gluten-free foods are widely available in grocery stores around the country, although strict adherence to a gluten-free diet can be difficult due to "hidden" gluten in many processed foods such as cold cuts, soups, soy sauce, candy, and many low or nonfat products.

Dieticians and nutritionists can teach people with celiac disease how to maintain a well-balanced diet, and read labels to avoid foods with gluten. With proper management, most people with celiac disease have a normal lifespan.

Learn more about celiac disease and how to maintain a healthy, gluten-free lifestyle at the [Celiac Disease Foundation](#).

Are you concerned about a friend or family member's health? If you, or someone you know, is interested in addiction recovery services, mental health care for children or adults, or primary care, contact InterCommunity. To receive services at any of our Hartford or East Hartford locations, please call 860-569-5900.



InterCommunity

Health Care for the Whole Person

40
*Years of
Caring*



Like us on Facebook