

IBS Treatment Center Newsletter

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We really can't thank you enough. The difference you have made in our lives cannot be measured by money. I tell everyone who will listen about you.

Kara Quello

Part One of a two-part series: The Many Forms of Gluten Intolerance

Understanding and Defining Celiac Disease

By Dr. Stephen Wangen

What is celiac disease?

You may have never heard of celiac disease, but it is actually a fairly common problem. In fact, 1 out of every 133 people has it. That is over 2 million people in this country. It is really more of an allergy than a disease, although it is typically called an intolerance to gluten.

What is gluten?

Gluten is a protein found in wheat, barley, rye, spelt, kamut, triticale, and couscous. People who have celiac disease cannot eat any foods made out of these flours. Gluten is the thing that makes bread, well, bread. It

allows bread to rise and keeps it together with lots of nice little air pockets, making your bread light and spongy. Without gluten it is difficult to make bread that is not heavy and dense.

What are the symptoms of celiac disease?

The symptoms vary widely. Celiac disease is typically thought of as a condition that causes diarrhea, abdominal pain, gas and bloating. However, many people do not experience these symptoms at all. They may experience constipation, weight gain, fatigue, headaches, heartburn, skin problems such as eczema and acne, or any number of health problems.

What exactly happens to the body in celiac disease?

In people with celiac disease, eating gluten leads to damage of the small intestine. Damage is specifically done to the villi of the small intestine. Villi are tiny finger-like extensions of the surface of the intestinal tract. They can only be seen under a microscope. In celiac disease the villi are in essence worn down, or blunted. This is known as villous atrophy. It's something like the difference between holding your hand open with your fingers out, and having your hand clenched into a fist. The fist represents the blunted villi.

Why does this happen?

In people with celiac disease, their immune system is triggered by gluten to not only attack gluten, but to attack their own intestinal tract. This leads to villous atrophy. It is not known exactly why this happens, but it appears to be a genetic response to gluten.

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How is it diagnosed?

Celiac disease is diagnosed by measuring the damage to the small intestine. The presence of villous atrophy can be determined by a biopsy taken during an endoscopy (a procedure to scope your esophagus, stomach and the upper part of your small intestine) and seen under the microscope. The blood test for tissue transglutaminase antibodies has also been shown in scientific studies to be equally effective at determining whether or not there is villous atrophy.

Endomysial antibodies and reticulin antibodies are older blood tests that are not as reliable as the transglutaminase antibody, but if these tests are positive then they are also diagnostic for celiac disease.

What is the treatment for celiac disease?

The treatment for celiac disease is to stop eating gluten. That is easier said than done, but many thousands of people find that they are capable of completely removing gluten from their diet. Of course, it does take conscious effort. Gluten is found in almost all bread products, pastas, soy sauce, and many, many processed foods. However, there are many companies now producing gluten free alternatives, and more are coming out every month.

What is the long term outcome for people with celiac disease?

Fortunately, removing gluten from the diet usually reverses the damage that had already been caused. Significant improvement is usually noticed within weeks if not days, and continued improvement and healing may go on for 1-2 years.

Are there other forms of gluten intolerance?

Many people do not have celiac disease, but it is clear to them that eating gluten is making them sick. This is an important topic. Be sure to read Part Two in the next newsletter, Understanding Non-Celiac Forms of Gluten Intolerance.



Back to Nature

Sara was a 25 year old with frequent abdominal pain, gas and bloating. Occasionally she would get diarrhea, but other times she would get constipation. There didn't seem to be any pattern to her symptoms and she was getting very frustrated. She had seen several doctors and no one had been able to help her. All of her tests were normal. She was very active and liked to spend a great deal of time outdoors, hiking in the mountains. But staying active was becoming more and more difficult for her. Her energy was low and her mood was getting low too. She stated that she was too young to be feeling this way.

Sara did blood testing for food allergies and tissue transglutaminase antibodies (celiac disease), and a stool test for parasites, bacteria and yeast. The most significant result was that she tested positive for celiac disease. She responded that she ate some form of wheat or gluten at almost every single meal. No wonder she felt sick!

Sara learned about the different places that gluten was hidden in her diet. She also learned about the types of food that she could eat that would not cause her to suffer. She found that there are now many gluten free options in most grocery stores. But best of all, Sara began to feel much better. Her digestive problems went away, and her energy improved. Soon she was back to her normal self, enjoying the outdoors and loving life.



If you think you may have Celiac Disease or other food sensitivities, contact the **IBS Treatment Center for an appointment today!*

*Email: info@IBSTreatmentCenter.com
(206)264-1111 or toll free 1-(888)-546-6283*

Events Calendar:

September: IBS Support Group

IBS can leave a person feeling lonely and misunderstood, but the truth is 50 million Americans are dealing with it! Better than knowing you're not alone is learning that it is possible to be rid of IBS! Visit our group for support and get some answers!

Most meetings will be attended by Dr. Stephen Wangen, founder of the IBS Treatment Center and author of *The Irritable Bowel Syndrome Solution*. The group will meet on the **first Tuesday of every month at the IBS Treatment Center.**

[Click here for details.](#)



September: GIG (Gluten Intolerance Group) Support Group

Come to the Central Seattle chapter of GIG and get the latest information while making friends who truly know what life is like without gluten! Bring your best tips and maybe even a recipe to share!

Meetings are held on the **2nd Wednesday of each month at the IBS Treatment Center** (co-located with the Center for Food Allergies) and most will be attended by Dr. Stephen Wangen, founder of the IBS Treatment Center and Center for Food Allergies.

[Click here for details.](#)

