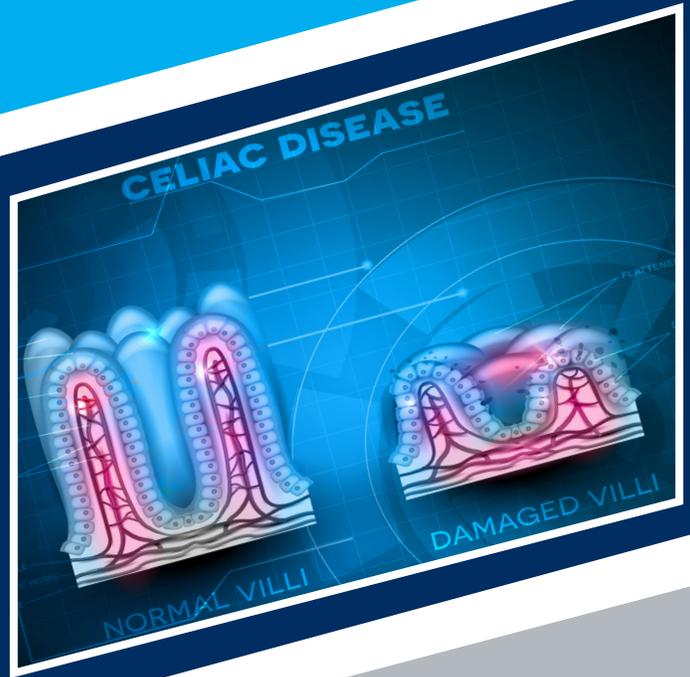


Celiac Disease:

Celiac disease is a genetic autoimmune disorder in which the ingestion of gluten leads to inflammation and damage of the small intestine.



In recent years, fad diets and health trends promising rapid weight loss and healthy bodies have become more than one person can comprehend. A gluten free diet has been at the forefront of those diets rising in popularity. Often times, it is seen as only a trend. For those suffering with Celiac Disease, it is the lifestyle that keeps their bodies healthy.

Disease Background and Symptoms:

Ingestion of gluten (a protein found in wheat, rye and barley) in individuals with Celiac Disease results in an inflammatory autoimmune response that attacks the small intestine. This results in damage to the villi, which

are finger-like projections that line the small intestine and are crucial for nutrient absorption. Damaged villi result in a decreased absorption of nutrients responsible for many metabolic functions that allow the body to function properly.

Common symptoms found in children include, but are not limited to: abdominal bloating and pain, chronic diarrhea, vomiting, constipation, weight loss, fatigue, and attention deficit disorder. Adults are less likely to experience many of the digestive symptoms commonly found in children and are more likely to experience unexplained iron deficiency, fatigue, bone and joint pain, osteoporosis or osteopenia, and skin rashes.

Celiac disease is typically divided into Classical, Non-Classical, and Silent celiac disease types. Classical

celiac disease patients have signs and symptoms of malabsorption including diarrhea, fatty stools, weight loss, and growth failure among children. Non-Classical Celiac disease is characterized by mild gastrointestinal symptoms without classic signs of malabsorption such as weight loss and diarrhea. Non-Classical symptoms can include abdominal distension and pain along with chronic fatigue and vitamin and mineral deficiency. Silent Celiac disease is considered “silent” due to the fact most patients are completely unaware of their underlying condition. People with silent Celiac disease report no symptoms but are still experiencing intestinal damage, which can cause disease progression.

Screening and Diagnosis:

A simple blood test can be used to screen patients for celiac disease. People with celiac disease have a high level of specific antibodies that are produced by the immune system and indicate the presence of inflammation. In order for this test to be performed, the member must be ingesting foods containing gluten. If the patient is on a gluten free diet this test will not be accurate. The only way to truly confirm celiac disease is by undergoing an endoscopic biopsy of the small intestine.

Treatment:

There is currently no “treatment” for Celiac disease. The only way patients can manage the disease is by adhering to a strict gluten free diet. Living gluten free requires people to cut out foods such as bread and beer, and depending on the severity of gluten intolerance, even small amounts of gluten can result in intestinal damage. The lack of awareness combined with the wide array of symptom presentation in this disease lead to an under diagnosis, which is why it is so important to make your primary care physician aware of any concerns and make sure you are screened.

If diagnosed with Celiac Disease, recent increase in awareness has made it easier to eat a diet free of gluten . From gluten free restaurants and bakeries, to gluten free sections in super markets there are many options to choose from.

ProAct encourages you to be aware of the signs and symptoms of Celiac Disease and to visit your doctor annually.

Sincerely,
Your ProAct Team