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Gluten Intolerance (Celiac Sprue)

Celiac Sprue is a condition whereby the absorption of food nutrients through the small intestine is impaired because of an immune or allergic reaction to *gluten*. Gluten is a protein found in wheat, rye, barley, and oats, or related grains, and is present in many foods that we eat. It is the gluten in the flour that helps bread and other baked goods bind and prevent crumbling. This feature has made gluten widely used in the production of many processed and packaged foods.

Celiac sprue is generally reversible once certain grains or products of grains are removed from the diet.

There are blood tests developed specifically for the detection of celiac patients. Relatives of patients with celiac sprue are found to have an increased risk of developing this condition. A definitive diagnosis can only be made by an endoscopy procedure with a small bowel biopsy, performed by a specialist in the gastroenterology field.

Common Symptoms include:

- Anemia
- Chronic diarrhea
- Weight loss
- Fatigue
- Cramps and bloating
- Irritability

At present, there is no cure for Celiac Disease. When it is diagnosed it can be readily treated by following a gluten-free diet.

For further information click on the following web links:

- <http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/celiac/>
- www.gunncenter.com/articles/Celiac%20Disease%202005.pdf
- www.celiac.com
- www.glutenfree.com