

# Family Friendly Factsheet



## Coeliac Disease

### What is coeliac disease?

Coeliac disease is a lifelong condition of the small intestine which is caused by gluten. Gluten is a type of protein which is commonly found in rye, wheat and barley products. The most common foods which contain gluten are cereals and breads.

### How does gluten affect me?

The small intestine contains villi, which are tiny finger like projections. These provide a large surface area where are absorbed. If you suffer from coeliac disease a reaction occurs when gluten comes in contact with the lining of the small intestine wall. This results in nutrients from food moving along the gut without being absorbed. This can lead to diarrhoea and vitamin and mineral deficiencies such as anaemia and osteoporosis.

### Who is at risk?

The disease affects 1 in 300 people in the UK. Coeliac disease can affect you at any age. The disease can be associated with other conditions such as Type 1 Diabetes and thyroid problems.

A risk factor for developing the disease can increase if there is a history of the condition in the family; this is because coeliac disease generally occurs in people who are genetically prone to it.

### Statistics:

- 10% chance of developing celiac disease if a parent, sibling or child has it.
- if you have an identical twin with the condition your chances of develop the disease are 70%

### What are the symptoms?

The condition has many varied symptoms and the symptoms in adults are different to those in children.

### Childhood Symptoms

In childhood, symptoms do not appear until gluten-containing foods are introduced into the diet. These symptoms include...

- Poor appetite, irritability and failure to gain weight.
- Pale, bulky and smelly stools
- Vomiting and diarrhoea.
- Swollen stomach.

- Arm and leg muscles become wasted and thin.

### Adult Symptoms

- Extreme tiredness.
- Psychological problems such as depression.
- Bone pain.
- Ulcers in the mouth.
- A blistering, itchy skin rash mostly on the elbows and knees.

### How is it diagnosed?

The condition is diagnosed through blood tests by your GP.

### The treatment!

It is not possible to prevent coeliac disease, but a gluten free diet can reverse damage to the small intestine. This requires considerable discipline. After diagnosis your GP should refer you for a consultation with a dietitian who can give you diet sheets and advice on how to manage a gluten free diet. It is important to replace the vitamins and minerals lost from not eating gluten products through incorporating other foods into your diet or taking supplements.

Avoiding gluten does not cause serious side effects. However, gluten free food can have lower fibre content and can increase cases of constipation in some people. To counteract this, eat plenty of fruit and vegetables.

### What is a gluten free diet?

A gluten free diet means avoiding all foods containing gluten. Below is a quick summary of the food you should and shouldn't eat.

### Things to avoid:

- Bread, pasta and breakfast cereals.
- Biscuits, cakes and pastries.
- Malt vinegar, soy sauce, mustard and mayonnaise.
- Some tinned soups and sauces.
- Crisps and chips.
- Vegetable oil.
- Beer and whisky.

### Foods you can eat:

- All fruit, salads and vegetables.
- Potatoes.



- Rice and maize.
- Nuts.
- Red meat, chicken, fish, eggs and dairy products.

**Is there a cure?**

A gluten free diet should enable the lining of the small intestine to return to normal in most people, however damage will return as soon as you start eating gluten again. This means the disease can be 'cured', but only by avoiding those foods that contain gluten. If you do this, you can enjoy a good quality of life without symptoms or long term complications.