



# Gluten Intolerance Group: Raising Awareness

GIG Education  
Bulletin

Updated Feb. 2007

## What is celiac disease?

GSE (Gluten Sensitive Enteropathy) includes celiac disease (CD) and dermatitis herpetiformis (DH). In these hereditary immune system disorders, protein fractions in wheat, rye and barley set off a chain of events that lead to tissue damage. Celiac disease involves destruction of the lining of the small intestine. Dermatitis herpetiformis involves destruction of the lining of the small intestine and includes a skin disorder where antibody deposits trigger itchy, blistering skin eruptions. Celiac disease is called the great masquerader. Celiac disease is no longer considered just a gastrointestinal disorder. It is a multi-system, multi-symptom disorder, often without GI symptoms.

The prevalence of CD in the United States is 1 in 133 persons. The overall prevalence of gluten sensitive disorders is unknown but is possible 2 to 3 times as high as that of CD.

Very little information is available about gluten intolerance, which is not necessarily triggered by the immune system and is therefore not celiac disease.

## Symptoms

GSE may present with a wide range of symptoms, making diagnosis sometimes difficult. Usually those with celiac disease have more damage to the small intestine than persons with DH. Most people are not diagnosed with the classic "text book" symptoms, but rather with a range of symptoms of atypical or non-GI complaints affecting other body area. Classic symptoms include: diarrhea, vomiting, bloating, weight loss, anemia, chronic fatigue, weakness, bone pain and muscle cramps. Other symptoms can include constipation; constipation alternating with diarrhea; balance problems; migraine headaches, seizures, or other neurological complaints; behavioral, memory and learning challenges; growth and maturation problems; infertility; or premature bone disease. Anyone with a genetic predisposition can develop GSE.

## Diagnosis

Blood antibody tests are a useful screening tool. According to the National Institutes of Health, testing for celiac disease should include:

\* Tissue Transglutaminase IgA and IgG (tTG-IgA & IgG) or Anti-endomysial Antibodies IgA (EMA IgA)

\* IgA Deficiency Test.

The combination of these tests is considered to be the most specific and sensitive for celiac disease. Although many laboratory tests can show that foods are not being processed normally by the digestive tract, a small intestine tissue biopsy is the gold standard for diagnosis of celiac disease. When a diagnosis of celiac disease is uncertain, HLA DQ2 and DQ8 testing can identify a person's genetic tendency to develop celiac disease.

Dermatitis herpetiformis is diagnosed by examining the deposits of immune components (IgA) in skin biopsies. Skin biopsies for DH are taken in unaffected skin very close to a lesion. Persons diagnosed with DH may be referred to a gastroenterologist for GI work-up as well. Approximately 2 percent of persons with GSE are IgA deficient. In this situation, all the above tests with the exception of the IgG components will be normal, regardless if that person has CD or DH.

## Treatment

Eliminating wheat, rye, barley and products with proteins (gluten) from these

## Membership Order Form

Join the GIG team. New members will receive a membership packet, including a subscription for one year to the GIG Quarterly Magazine, a Quick Reference Ingredient Card useful when shopping, as well as discounts on programs and other helpful information.

### Annual membership

United States: \$35

Canada and Mexico: \$50

Other countries: \$55

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Optional donation:  
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grains is essential. In fact, a positive response to the gluten-free diet is required for the diagnosis of CD to be confirmed. Once the immune system misidentifies these grains, a cascade of events leads to tissue damage every time for the person with CD/DH. When gluten-containing foods are removed from the diet, tissues can heal. Anytime wheat, rye and barley products are eaten, some tissue damage will occur, regardless of the presence or absence of symptoms.

### **What is GIG?**

GIG is respected globally as a powerful leader in the celiac community at the forefront of innovative action.

The mission of the Gluten Intolerance Group of North America is to provide support to persons with gluten intolerances, including celiac disease, dermatitis herpetiformis, and other gluten sensitivities, in order to live healthy lives.

GIG fulfills its mission of supporting people living with gluten intolerance through programs directed to consumers, health professionals and the public. GIG programs provide:

- \* Support and education
- \* Awareness and advocacy
- \* Research awareness and support

GIG is dedicated to providing accurate, scientific, evidence-based information.

### **GIG PROGRAMS INCLUDE:**

**SUPPORT AND EDUCATION** Support and education occur at four levels: the patients, health professionals, food manufacturers and the hospitality industry, and the public.

**AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY** Current awareness programs include a national print and radio awareness campaign for celiac disease, as well as providing articles, interviews, and lectures, to the community. GIG is also a proactive member of a number of coalitions to bring about increased awareness of gluten intolerance.

**RESEARCH AWARENESS AND SUPPORT** GIG supports research projects by providing information to patients about potential participation. GIG encourages support of research through advocacy efforts. When appropriate, GIG provides financial support to research institutions.

### **Immune system disorders associated with celiac disease and DH**

Those with celiac disease and/or dermatitis herpetiformis are likely to have a greater risk for developing other related immune system disorders. The link between CD/DH and these disorders is thought to be hereditary and often shared by family members.

These disorders may include: Addison 's disease, Alopecia Areata, Graves ' disease, Insulin-dependent Diabetes, Myasthenia Gravis, Scleroderma, Sjogrens Syndrome, Lupus, Thyroid Disease.

CD/DH is also associated with other problems. Some of these include: Neurological problems, fertility complications, bone disease. This is not an exhaustive list.

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*Advances in celiac disease are fast paced. If this document is more than 2 years old, please visit our website for updated documents.*

*This information should not be used to diagnose or treat celiac disease. See your health care team for diagnosis and treatment options specifically for you.*

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*GIG is a nonprofit 501c3 national organization providing support for per persons with gluten intolerances, in order to live health, productive lives. GIG Branches provide support at a local level.*

*To make a donation or become a volunteer to GIG, visit our website or call the office at 253-833-6655.*