

CELIAC DISEASE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS CELIAC DISEASE?

Celiac disease is an autoimmune disease that involves the small intestine and other organs, and is triggered by eating gluten. It occurs in at least 1% of all people, and can affect people of all ages, but often starts in childhood.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CELIAC DISEASE AND GLUTEN INTOLERANCE/SENSITIVITY/ALLERGY?

Celiac disease is an autoimmune disease in which the immune system causes injury to the inner lining of the small intestine in response to eating gluten, whereas gluten intolerance/sensitivity is a condition where someone feels bad when they eat gluten, but they know they don't have celiac disease. This is called "Non-Celiac Gluten Sensitivity." People with celiac disease may or may not experience symptoms when they eat gluten.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE A POSITIVE CELIAC ANTIBODY TEST?

The celiac autoantibody test used to screen for celiac disease is called the "tissue Transglutaminase autoantibody" (tTg). Being autoantibody positive does not necessarily mean you have celiac disease. However, it does mean there may be an autoimmune process taking place that could lead to celiac disease. Additional testing is necessary to make a diagnosis of celiac disease.

WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH A POSITIVE TEST?

Remember, a positive test on its own does NOT diagnose celiac disease. It is important to talk to your doctor about a positive test, and consider seeing a Pediatric Gastroenterologist to further evaluate for celiac disease. Do not start a gluten-free diet based just on this test alone. Starting a gluten-free diet before doing confirmation testing can make later testing difficult to interpret.

HOW IS CELIAC TREATED?

A strict, life-long gluten-free diet is the **ONLY WAY** to manage celiac disease. Consult with your doctor *before* committing to this diet, since celiac disease should be confirmed first.