



Share the Wellness Tip

September 20, 2013

Going Against the Grains

One in 133 Americans has celiac disease. This autoimmune digestive disease damages the small intestine, harming the ability to absorb nutrients from food.

A serious condition, celiac disease can lead to neurological disorders, infertility, some cancers, and related autoimmune diseases. But if properly diagnosed and treated by removing all gluten from the diet, people with celiac disease can live full, healthy lives. Celiac disease is not contagious, but it is hereditary.

A related condition called gluten sensitivity or non-celiac gluten sensitivity can have symptoms similar to celiac disease but without the intestinal damage.

Eliminating gluten from the diet takes commitment and knowledge. Learning about the condition and how to live gluten-free can help you avoid symptoms and future complications.

The symptoms of celiac disease vary widely from person to person, along with their severity and duration. As a result, celiac disease is often misdiagnosed or undiagnosed. The most common symptoms include bloating, gas, diarrhea, constipation, joint pain, an itchy skin rash, pale mouth sores, headaches, depression, irritability, discolored teeth and fatigue.

Doctors can diagnose the disease based on the appearance of symptoms, a blood test and a biopsy of the small intestine. The only treatment is to stop eating gluten. In many cases, people with celiac disease who stop eating gluten start to feel better within days. If they stick to a gluten-free diet, they can expect their small intestine to heal in as little as three months to as long as several years.

A recent poll cited that the top two reasons people gave for buying gluten-free food was that they believed it was healthier and that it would help them manage their weight.

Many people believe that dropping gluten from your diet can help you lose weight. However, it could lead to weight gain because extra fat and sugar may be added to gluten-free foods to improve taste.

Sources: The New York Times, August 4, 2013, Harvard Health Publications

