

## **“Is gluten free for me?”**

### **James T. Kwiatt, MD**

GI Associates, LLC

[www.docglutenfree.com](http://www.docglutenfree.com)

414-454-0600

## **KEY POINTS**

### **Healthy carbohydrate digestion**

- Takes place in the small intestine
- Intestine moves food particles along and absorbs nutrients
- Requires motility, enzymes, and surface area

### **Gluten**

- A protein found in wheat, barley, and rye
- Helps bread dough rise and helps food stick together
- Added to foods to enhance protein content as well as to improve texture
- Not just in bread

### **Celiac Disease**

- An autoimmune disease in which the immune system attacks native organs
- Body reacts to gluten, attacking the small intestine
- 1 in 133 Americans; 3 million Americans have celiac

### **Testing for celiac**

- Testing needs to be performed on regular diet
- Lab Tests
- Samples (biopsies) of the small intestine by a procedure called an endoscopy
- Tests are inaccurate in people on a gluten free diet.
- Always consult with a physician prior to starting a gluten free diet for this reason.

## **Is there a health benefit to going “gluten free”?**

- Definitely in celiac disease.
- The data on gluten free diets being helpful for problems other than celiac disease demonstrates mixed results.
- Celiac disease is a serious health condition and formal testing should be discussed with a physician.
- Many common health conditions can benefit from a healthy diet.
- Gluten free diets may be helpful for irritable bowel syndrome, but medical research on the diet in other health conditions is limited.

<b>Celiac Disease</b>	<b>Gluten Intolerance</b>
Immune reaction causing destruction of the small intestine	Inability to digest certain carbohydrates. Lining of intestine is healthy
Causes severe GI distress and other symptoms	Causes severe GI distress and other symptoms
Diet must be 100% without gluten	Diet can contain some gluten as tolerated
Risk of nutritional problems	No nutritional risk as long as diet remains balanced
Risk of bone density issues	No risk of bone density issues
Small risks of cancer	No risk of cancer
Family members at risk of of the problem	Family members not at risk of the problem

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