

**FOOD**

# GLUTEN INTOLERANCE AND CELIAC DISEASE

**GLUTEN** is the name given to various insoluble proteins present in some cereals, such as wheat, barley or rye. When in contact with water, gluten gives some types of cereal a flexible gluey consistency.

Its composition is not always the same in all cereals and, therefore, the consequences for those who are intolerant are also different. While wheat, rye and barley are prohibited cereals for those suffering from celiac disease, corn and rice, in turn, can be tolerated.

Non-celiac gluten intolerance is the inability or difficulty to digest gluten; in these cases, gluten damages the walls of the small intestine, causing diarrhoea, pain



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and abdominal swelling, and also hindering the absorption of nutrients.

With celiac disease, there is also an intolerance to gluten, but the immune system causes a reaction and a more serious condition, inflammation, intense pain and frequent diarrhoea.

Gluten intolerance is permanent and, therefore, there is no cure. It is necessary to completely remove gluten from the diet for the symptoms to disappear, the most common of which include:

- Frequent diarrhoea (3 to 4 times a day, with a large volume of stool);

- Persistent vomiting;
- Irritability;
- Loss of appetite;
- Weight loss with no apparent cause;
- Abdominal pain;
- Swollen abdomen;
- Pallor;
- Anaemia;
- Decrease in muscle mass.

The causes of intolerance are not fully known. However, it is possible that gluten intolerance may have a genetic origin or might occur due to altered intestinal permeability, or even due to both of these factors.

It is not sufficient to

diagnose gluten intolerance or allergy just from the symptoms. Symptoms are an indication that medical help should be sought. Only a specialist using various means of diagnosis, which may include a biopsy, can discover the patient's relationship with gluten.

The only treatment for gluten intolerance basically consists of excluding it from the diet for life. There are many other ways of replacing it, with corn, corn flour, corn starch, potato, potato starch, cassava, cassava flour.

By removing gluten from

the diet, symptoms may disappear in a few days or weeks.

Anyone suffering from gluten intolerance should therefore exclude the following food from their diet: bread, pasta, cookies, cakes, beer, pizza, snacks and any food containing gluten.

It is important to follow the diet correctly to avoid complications caused by this disease. It is, therefore, necessary to make sure processed or frozen food packages do not contain gluten and, if so, do not buy them. This information is printed on most food labels.

It is also worth knowing

that celiac patients do not all have the same degree of disease. There are sensitive cases where as little as 50 milligrams of the protein – the equivalent of a hundredth of a slice of bread – can already cause damage to the walls of the intestine. In other cases, a small amount of gluten may be tolerated.

Article submitted by HPA Group

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