

Coeliac Disease – Fact Sheet

Coeliac disease, also known as *gluten-sensitivity enteropathy* or *coeliac sprue* is a chronic autoimmune disorder that results from abnormal T-cell mediated responses. It is a permanent intestinal intolerance to gluten (wheat, barley, rye) and oats in some people. The cause of this disease is unknown and complex with an associated link involving dietary, genetic and immunological disorders. Consuming gluten containing foods causes inflammation and damage to the small intestine (particularly the duodenum and jejunum). Malabsorption is common in people with coeliac disease as consuming gluten causes destruction and flattening of the intestinal villi as normal secretory, digestive and absorptive functions are impaired. If left untreated complications such as anaemia, female infertility, osteoporosis and cancer may develop.

Coeliac disease can be asymptomatic in some people however common signs and symptoms include: weight loss, growth failure (in young children), bruise easily, anorexia, anaemia, apathy, gastrointestinal disturbances (diarrhoea, constipation, stomach pain, nausea and possible vomiting), bone and joint pain, mouth ulcers, bloating, fatigue, osteoporosis and feeling faint and fainting.

Nutritional Recommendations

Foods to avoid:

- Avoid all forms of gluten (wheat, barley, rye and oats if affected). Other names of gluten containing products include; wheat germ, spelt, couscous, bulgur, semolina, triticale, malt).
- Be very vigilant with products such as; sauces, sausages and other processed meats, gravies, packet mixes, marinades, cereals, powdered drinks, ice-creams, medications and supplements as these can also contain gluten.
- Avoid lactose if not tolerated well.

Foods to include:

- Antioxidant rich foods to support and maintain a healthy immune system and to prevent further inflammation of the gastrointestinal track. Foods such as leafy green vegetables and rich coloured fruits.
- Wholefoods diet (including quality protein, fresh vegetables and fruits and complex carbohydrates) as this is often the easiest way to avoid gluten containing foods.

Other Suggestions:

- Digestive enzymes, probiotics and prebiotics to help with food digestion and increasing the quantity of good bacteria.
- Add slippery elm, flaxseed or psyllium husk to meals and drinks to absorb excess water in bowel and to soothe the GIT.
- Drink aloe vera juice as it provides anti-inflammatory and healing benefits to the mucosal tissues.
- Avoid/reduce stimulants such as caffeine, chilli, alcohol, soft drinks and other refined sugars as these foods can be irritating for Coeliac's.
- Drink adequate water – at least 1.5L daily.

Nutritional deficiencies are often seen in Coeliac's as the intestinal villi can be damaged easily inhibiting proper absorption. It is essential that these deficiencies are treated to prevent further complications down the tract.

Customised nutritional plans comprising of a specific food plan with the support of nutrient/herbal supplements can be very effective in the management of coeliac disease. If you require support please visit www.good4younutrition.com.au