

What is Gluten? Gluten is not a protein but a protein deposit which is found within the seeds of grass-related grains such as wheat, rye and barley. It is the glue-like substance that holds flour products together and provides them with a chewy texture. We have come to rely on it as a utility for obtaining a desired texture and elasticity in foods. Recently, there has been some substantial and controversial studies suggesting our bodies may not tolerate and digest gluten. If you think removing gluten from your diet involves not eating bread and baked goods, I'm afraid you're mistaken. Gluten is in more foods and products than you may realize. It is often used in sauces, flavorings, flavor enhancers and even as a binder or filler in vitamins and supplements.

Sensitivity to gluten occurs when the proteins it contains trigger your immune system to overreact with strong and unusual antibodies. Over time, such antibodies wear down the little hairs called villi which line the walls of your intestine. These finger-like tiny hairs grab and absorb nutrients as foods pass through your lower digestive tract. As these villi are destroyed, you become less and less able to process any nutrition from your food. This sets off a domino-effect of increasingly serious health problems. Gluten sensitivity is also associated with leaky gut syndrome. Leaky gut is when undigested gluten moves through the intestinal wall and into the bloodstream.

Many people know gluten sensitivity as Celiac Disease. Even though there is a test for Celiac Disease, not everyone tests positive. It is also possible to be Non Celiac Gluten Sensitive. The only way to confidently diagnose NCGS is through a gluten free diet. There is now a saliva test for NCGS available at our office.

In a vast majority of cases, gluten intolerance symptoms will be systemic and will be a result of consuming gluten over a period of time. For example, if you eat a large, dense piece of gluten-rich bread and have immediate reactions, you are more likely experiencing a wheat allergy rather than symptoms of gluten intolerance. Gluten intolerance symptoms manifest themselves more like a nutritional deficiency, with symptoms that arise slowly over time. Gastrointestinal distress or digestive disorders also sometimes originate from *gluten intolerance*, for example, some symptoms of Candida.

The most accurate way to identify and diagnose your gluten intolerance symptoms is to use an elimination diet, a strict diet in which you completely eliminate gluten and gluten-associated foods for a significant period of time, then use careful record-keeping and observation to compare your symptoms before the elimination period to your symptoms after the elimination period.