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*Celiac Disease is the most common chronic intestinal disease in the world.*<sup>6</sup>

## **DESCRIPTION**

Celiac disease was traditionally defined as a gastrointestinal malabsorption disorder that presents early in childhood after the introduction of dietary gluten. It is now recognized that the clinical manifestations are highly variable, may present at any age, and involve multiple organ systems.<sup>4</sup>

Although also referred to as gluten sensitive enteropathy, non-tropical sprue or celiac sprue, celiac disease is the term most often utilized. The International Classification of Diseases (ICD) code for celiac disease is “579.0 Celiac Disease.”

Celiac disease is an inherited lifelong intolerance to gluten, a protein found in the grains of wheat, barley, rye and oats. When ingested, gluten precipitates hyperpermeability and inflammation of the small intestinal lining, or mucosa, and damage to its structures and function. Damage to the mucosa interferes with nutrient absorption and triggers the formation of autoimmune antibodies.

Strict exclusion of gluten from the diet usually results in rapid healing of the mucosa, resolution or improvement of nutrient deficiencies, and the disappearance of many manifestations of celiac disease.

Celiac disease is a complex disorder with six components:

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|--------------------------|--|
| 1. <b>Genetic.</b>       | It is inherited, meaning it runs in families.                        |
| 2. <b>Chronic.</b>       | It never goes away. Damage worsens with continued gluten ingestion.  |
| 3. <b>Autoimmune.</b>    | The immune system attacks the body's own tissue.                     |
| 4. <b>Digestive.</b>     | The digestive system is damaged, disrupting its ability to function. |
| 5. <b>Malabsorption.</b> | Nutrients are not properly absorbed by the damaged digestive system. |
| 6. <b>Multi-system.</b>  | Every part of the body can be affected.                              |

1. **Genetic.** People who have inherited genes for celiac disease have the “potential” to develop an autoimmune response triggered by gluten exposure. Potential means there can be no response without first eating food that is made with wheat, barley, rye, or oats. The gluten protein precipitates development of “active” celiac disease.

2. **Chronic.** Once developed, active celiac disease continues as long as gluten is consumed. Damage stops only when gluten-containing food is completely removed from the diet. Susceptibility to future harm from gluten remains because it is part of the genetic make-up.

3. **Autoimmune.** Celiac disease first affects the digestive tract. All health problems begin when partially digested sub units of gluten contact the surface of the small intestinal lining. A destructive, autoimmune response occurs in the small intestine at the site where gluten is being digested. Once the autoimmune reaction is triggered, inflammation and damage result.