

# Celiac disease

## What I need to know

### What is celiac disease?

Celiac disease is an intestinal disease. People who suffer from celiac disease can't tolerate gluten\*. When they eat gluten, their small intestine becomes inflamed.

### What happens in the small intestine?

The mucous membrane of the small intestine becomes inflamed. This means that people with celiac disease can no longer properly digest their food. As a result, the body absorbs very few of the nutrients that are vital for life.

### Who gets celiac disease?

- Women are much more likely than men to develop celiac disease. There are twice as many women as men suffering from celiac disease.
- You can get celiac disease at any age. Most people are over 20 years old when they get celiac disease.
- Many people don't realize that they have celiac disease. About 1 percent of people in Switzerland – almost 90,000 – have it.

### Celiac disease is a hereditary condition.

Does someone in your family have celiac disease? For example:

- Your mother • Your father • Your children • Your sister • Your brother.

Then you may also have celiac disease. → Get tested, even if you have no symptoms.

### How do I know if I have celiac disease?

When the small intestine is inflamed, it can't digest properly. The body is unable to absorb vital nutrients. As a result, the body has too little iron and vitamins. You get deficiency symptoms. For example, you may feel tired and exhausted. You may get sick more often. You may get skin problems. Everyone experiences celiac disease differently. There are some typical symptoms. But you may have completely different symptoms..

### The following symptoms are typical for children and adolescents with celiac disease:

- They grow more slowly. → They have a bloated belly\*\*. → They weigh too little.

### The following symptoms are typical for adults with celiac disease:

- They have diarrhea. → They have bloating\*\*. → They have abdominal pain.

### Other signs of celiac disease:

- You have headaches. → You have joint pain..
- You feel dizzy. → You feel tired..

### Inflammation of the skin

Some people with celiac disease develop skin inflammation when they eat foods with gluten.

A number of small lumps and blisters form and cause itching. This skin inflammation mainly affects adults.

The skin almost never becomes inflamed in children. People with skin inflammation often have no problems with their stomach or intestines. But they may still have celiac disease.

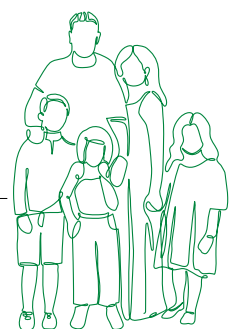
### Mental health problems

Mental health problems can also be caused by celiac disease, for example anxiety disorders, depression, eating disorders or ADHD.

### I have no symptoms. Can I still have celiac disease?

You may not notice anything at all.

But your doctor may see that you have iron deficiency. Or your liver values may be high. Then your doctor may find out that you have celiac disease nevertheless.



#### \*Gluten

Gluten is a protein. It is found in many types of grain, for example wheat, rye, spelt, and barley.

#### \*\*Bloating and gas

Your belly is very large and filled with air.

## When should I get tested?

### If you have symptoms:

- You have diarrhea for a long time.
- You are losing weight even though you don't want to.
- You have a deficiency. For example, you have too little iron in your blood.
- You have bloating or pain in your stomach. But you don't know why.

### You have another illness:

- You have type 1 diabetes.
- Your thyroid or adrenal glands are diseased.
- Your skin is permanently inflamed.

### Complaints outside of the stomach or intestines:

- Your joints hurt.
- Your liver values are elevated.
- You're constantly tired.
- Your tooth enamel is changing. Tooth enamel is the surface of your teeth.

➔ Do you have complaints like this? Then it's good to get tested.

## How is celiac disease detected?

The doctor will do a number of different tests, all of which are important:

### Talk with you

The doctor will ask you about your symptoms and problems.

### Blood test

The doctor will test your blood. If you have celiac disease, it will show up in your blood.

### Examination of the small intestine

The doctor will do a gastroscopy. This is when they look at your small intestine using a thin tube that goes through your mouth. There is a small camera on the end of the tube. This is to check for inflammation in your small intestine. The doctor will also take samples from your small intestine and examine them later.

You will be given a medication for the gastroscopy so that you don't feel any discomfort during the examination

➔ For children, a gastroscopy isn't always necessary.

**Be careful:** Only start eating gluten-free\* once your doctor has diagnosed you. If you start eating gluten-free before this, the symptoms in your blood and intestine will disappear and your doctor will no longer be able to make a clear diagnosis.

## What foods should I not eat if I have celiac disease?

If you have celiac disease, you must avoid any foods with gluten. You should not eat the following foods:

### Grains containing gluten:

- Wheat
- Rye
- Barley
- Spelt
- Triticale
- Kamut
- Einkorn wheat

### Products made from grains containing gluten:

- Flour
- Bread
- Cake
- Pasta/noodles
- Couscous
- Bulgur wheat
- Beer

Gluten is also found in many ready meals and spice mixtures. If a product contains gluten, it will say so on the packet.

\*Gluten-free ("glutenfrei")  
That means without gluten.



## What foods can I eat?

Fortunately, there are many gluten-free foods. There are even gluten-free grains. You can eat the following foods if you have celiac disease.

### Gluten-free foods

- All fruits
- All vegetables
- Nuts
- Potatoes
- Pulses (legumes), for example lentils or peas
- Dairy (milk) products, for example cheese, yogurt, and cream
- Eggs
- Meat

### Grains without gluten

- Corn
- Rice
- Millet
- Amaranth
- Quinoa
- Buckwheat
- Other gluten-free grains



### Products for people with celiac disease

There are also ready-made products that are specially made for people with celiac disease. These products are without gluten. It will say on the packet that the product is gluten-free ("glutenfrei"). You will find these products in health food stores and supermarkets.

### Why do I have to be careful with oats?

Oats are actually gluten-free. But they are often harvested and processed together with other grains. This is why products containing oats often also contain gluten. But there are products with oats that don't contain gluten. It will say so on the packet. You can eat these products.

## How can you treat celiac disease?

### Diet: no foods with gluten

You must not eat any food with gluten. This is the only thing that really helps. You will feel better again.

### Advice on diet and nutrition

It's very important to get advice. You can consult a nutrition expert. They will show you how to eat without gluten. They will also tell you what you can and cannot eat.

Your family doctor can prescribe this consultation for you. Then your health insurance will pay for it.

### Vitamins and minerals

- Your doctor checks the vitamins and minerals in your body. Do you have too few of them? If so, they will give you tablets or an injection.
- The deficiency can make your bones weak. Are you already 30 years old? Then the doctor might do a bone density test to measure how strong your bones are. If your bones are no longer strong, you will be given medicine.

### Have regular check-ups

Make sure you see your nutrition expert regularly, especially during the first year. Also see your doctor. They'll be able to find out many things:

- Are you feeling better or do you still have problems?
- Are you eating the right diet?
- Does your body have enough vitamins and minerals?
- Do you have celiac antibodies\* in your blood?

→ You no longer need to have a gastroscopy

### Good to know:

Do you follow a gluten-free diet? Then you'll soon be feeling better and your body will recover. All your symptoms will disappear or improve.

#### \*Celiac antibodies

If a person has celiac disease, their body will build defenses. The antibodies are tiny. The doctor can find the antibodies in the blood.

## What happens if I don't treat celiac disease?

If you don't eat gluten-free, your body will not get enough nutrients.

### Your body will no longer be able to absorb these nutrients properly:

- Iron
- Folic acid
- Vitamin D
- Copper
- Calcium
- Vitamin B12
- Zinc

### These things can happen if these nutrients are missing:

- Your body produces too little blood.
- You get osteoporosis: your bones become weak.
- You can't have children.
- Your bones hurt.
- You have problems with your balance.
- Your hands or feet feel numb or sore.

### Tips and help

- It's difficult to eat only gluten-free food. This might be a strain for you. Get help in time. Talk to your doctor about it.
- If you join the IG Zöliakie disease support community, you will receive a lot of information. For example, you can find out where to buy products without gluten. Or you can get tips on which restaurants offer gluten-free food.
- IG Zöliakie organizes events and gluten-free cooking classes. There you can meet other people with celiac disease and share experiences.

**Do you think you have celiac disease? Don't wait: ask your doctor!**

## Important points of contact and IG Zöliakie partners

### Nutritional advice

Fachgruppe Zöliakie SVDE  
zoeliakie-ernaehrungsberatung.ch



SVDE ASDD



### Eating out

Guide Celiac  
guideceliac.ch



## Join the community now



Joining the IG Zöliakie disease support community has many advantages:

- **SENZA member magazine and newsletter with lots of practical and helpful information about celiac disease**
- **Information events and cooking/baking courses at discounted prices**
- **Sharing experiences with other people affected**
- **Vacation camps for children and teenagers**
- **Access to the CommunityApp**
- **Your medical questions answered by experts**
- **Starter kit for new members**
- **Access to the members' area with lots of helpful documents and links**