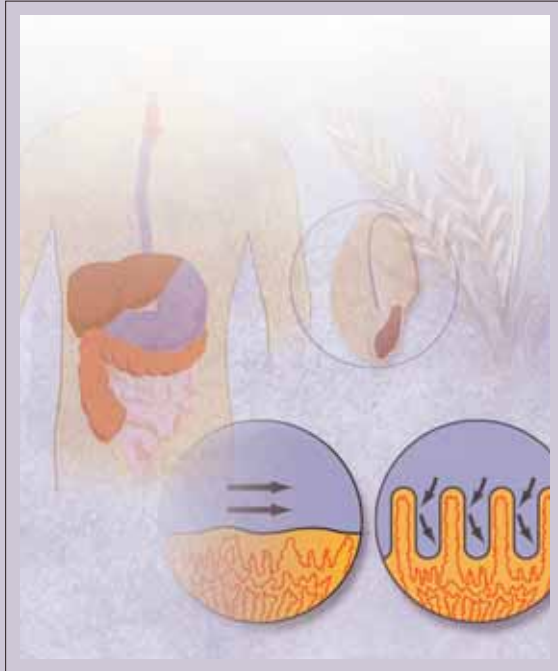


# Want to know more about coeliac disease?



## Coeliac disease

### FACT

*There are thought to be at least 125,000<sup>1</sup> people diagnosed with the coeliac condition in the UK and the numbers are increasing.*

On average over 7,000<sup>1</sup> people are diagnosed with coeliac disease in the UK each year. Experts researching the condition believe that the disease may affect as many as 1 person in every 100<sup>1</sup> with the majority of those undiagnosed.

Many people visiting their GP with unexplained symptoms may initially be diagnosed with 'irritable bowel syndrome' (IBS) before further investigations reveal they are suffering from coeliac disease.<sup>2</sup>

### FACT

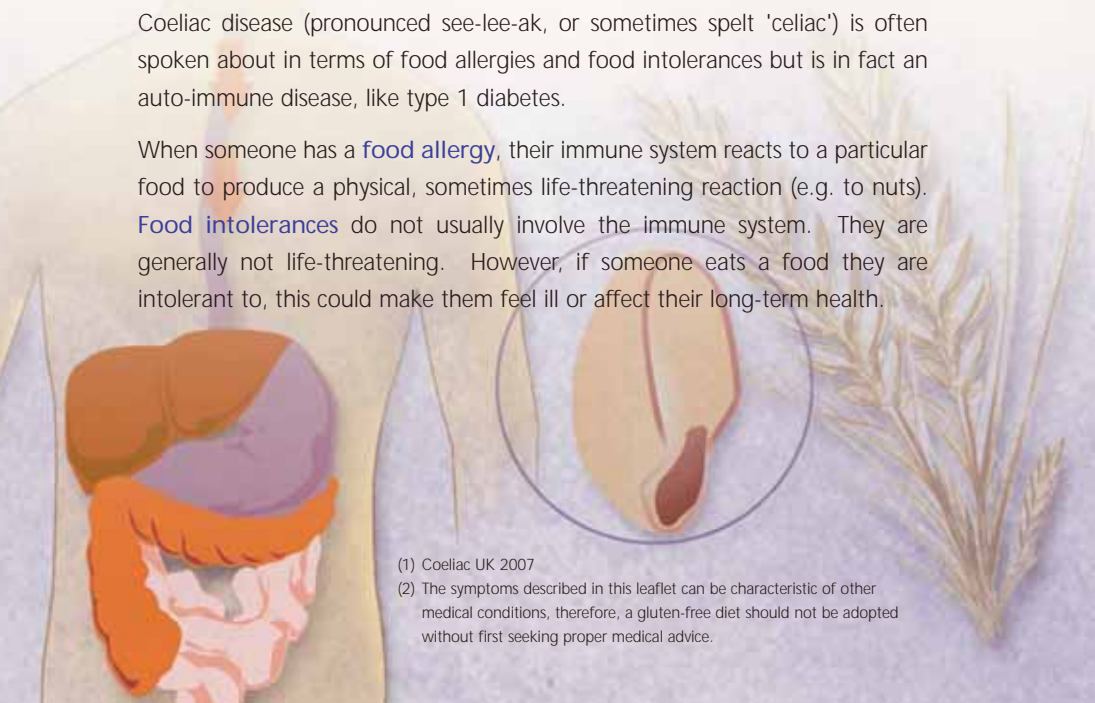
*The word 'coeliac' is derived from the Greek word koiliakos meaning "suffering in the bowels"*

Coeliac disease (pronounced see-lee-ak, or sometimes spelt 'celiac') is often spoken about in terms of food allergies and food intolerances but is in fact an auto-immune disease, like type 1 diabetes.

When someone has a **food allergy**, their immune system reacts to a particular food to produce a physical, sometimes life-threatening reaction (e.g. to nuts). **Food intolerances** do not usually involve the immune system. They are generally not life-threatening. However, if someone eats a food they are intolerant to, this could make them feel ill or affect their long-term health.

(1) Coeliac UK 2007

(2) The symptoms described in this leaflet can be characteristic of other medical conditions, therefore, a gluten-free diet should not be adopted without first seeking proper medical advice.



Coeliac disease is an **auto-immune disease** which is caused by gluten-intolerance. Gluten is a protein found in wheat, rye, barley and possibly oats. Eating foods containing gluten has a life-long damaging effect on the bowel.

FACT

*Coeliac disease can cause symptoms of malnutrition as food and nutrients remain undigested*

The finger-like projections in the bowel called villi, which aid the absorption of food, are destroyed by the gluten. So although a person may be following a well balanced healthy diet, they may develop symptoms such as weight loss, diarrhoea and anaemia as their body fails to absorb enough nutrients from food.

FACT

*Coeliac disease affects both men and women of all ages*

Coeliac disease was once considered a rare condition of childhood. Doctors are now seeing the disease in both children and adults. Coeliac disease in adults is commonly diagnosed between the ages of 30 and 45, but more and more people are being diagnosed in later life.

FACT

*Symptoms in adults vary from person to person*

Adults can experience a number of different symptoms including anaemia, diarrhoea, weight loss and fatigue. Other signs may be infertility, unexplained abdominal pain and generally feeling unwell. These symptoms can occur together or separately, be mild or severe. Occasionally, the stress of an operation, accident, intestinal infection or pregnancy can trigger the onset of this illness.<sup>2</sup>

**FACT** *Symptoms in childhood normally occur at the weaning stage*

Children who have been perfectly healthy from birth may fail to thrive at weaning. They may become irritable, have diarrhoea, vomiting, and pass pale stools. Older children may just stop growing and have less obvious symptoms.

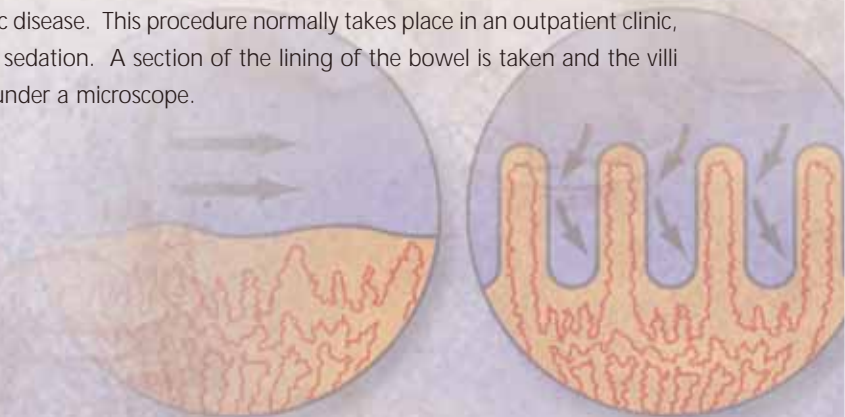
**FACT** *Coeliac disease does have a tendency to run in families*

Recent research has established that there is a genetic link to coeliac disease. One in 10 close relatives of a person diagnosed with coeliac disease<sup>1</sup> may also be affected, so family screening is recommended.

**FACT** *Coeliac disease can only be confirmed by an endoscopy*

Blood tests are now widely used to help screen for the condition. Self-testing kits are a useful starting point, but are not 100% accurate. Coeliac UK recommends that anyone who thinks they may have coeliac disease should visit their GP for further investigation.

Your GP will then refer you to a gastroenterologist who will carry out a small intestinal biopsy (endoscopy), the only official way to confirm that you definitely have coeliac disease. This procedure normally takes place in an outpatient clinic, under mild sedation. A section of the lining of the bowel is taken and the villi examined under a microscope.



**FACT**

*There is no miracle cure for coeliac disease. The treatment is a gluten-free diet for life*

It is still not exactly clear how gluten damages the bowel, however experts agree that once a gluten-free diet is followed the villi grow back. This means the body absorbs nutrients as normal and the symptoms disappear. Although the benefits of the diet can often be felt immediately, it can take many months before the bowel completely recovers.

**FACT**

*Expert dietary advice is available to all people diagnosed with coeliac disease*

After diagnosis you should be referred to a Registered Dietitian. If you are not referred, make sure you ask your GP or consultant for a referral. The dietitian will provide you with practical advice on how to follow a gluten-free diet<sup>3</sup> and assess your food intake to ensure you meet your nutritional needs. You will also be given information on special gluten free products.

**FACT**

*A gluten-free diet means avoiding all foods containing gluten*

The main source of gluten in the diet is wheat flour, which is used in the manufacture of many foods including bread, cakes and biscuits. Other possible sources of hidden gluten are sauces, sausages, ready meals and confectionery<sup>3</sup>.

Although recent studies suggest that 'pure' oats may be tolerated by some people with coeliac disease, it is extremely difficult to source oats that are not contaminated. Do not include oats in your diet unless you have discussed this with your gastroenterologist or dietitian.

(3) For further information on gluten-free diets, the Juvella Nutrition Centre produce an information leaflet '*Want to Know More About a Gluten-Free Diet?*'. Please refer to '*How to contact us?*' section at the back of this leaflet.



## Dermatitis herpetiformis & other linked conditions

### **FACT** *Dermatitis herpetiformis is a skin condition linked to coeliac disease*

Dermatitis Herpetiformis (DH) is a skin condition which like coeliac disease is due to gluten sensitivity.

People with DH have a very itchy skin rash which usually occurs on the buttocks, shoulders and knees. A biopsy of their small bowel will show damage to the villi in their small intestine. It is quite a rare condition affecting around 1 in 10,000 people.

The skin rash shows direct improvement when sufferers follow a strict gluten-free diet. If you suspect you may have the symptoms of this condition please seek proper medical advice before starting a gluten-free diet.

### **FACT** *Coeliac disease is closely associated with other medical conditions*

It is now known that coeliac disease is associated with some other medical conditions. This means that people with these conditions have a higher risk of developing coeliac disease. The medical conditions include Type 1 diabetes<sup>4</sup>, Down's syndrome and a range of auto-immune disorder including Thyroid disease, Liver disease, Addison's disease and Sjörger's syndrome.

If you are concerned about any of these related conditions please seek proper medical advice.

(4) For further information on coeliac disease and Type 1 diabetes. The Juvela Nutrition Centre produce an information leaflet Want to know more about coeliac disease and diabetes? Please refer to the How to contact us section at the back of this leaflet

## Gluten-Free diet

**FACT** *Many foods are naturally gluten-free*

Naturally gluten-free foods such as rice, corn, soya, potato, pulses, fresh meat, fish, dairy products, fruit and vegetables can be eaten freely.

**FACT** *Special gluten-free foods help coeliacs comply with the diet*

To make a gluten-free diet more varied and adaptable, a number of specially manufactured gluten-free products have been developed. These include bread, biscuits, flour mixes, breakfast cereals, pizza bases and pasta. Many of these gluten-free products are available on prescription<sup>5</sup> for people medically diagnosed with coeliac disease. If you pay for prescriptions you might consider buying a prescription 'season ticket'. Ask your pharmacist for details.

**FACT** *A person with coeliac disease who follows a well balanced gluten-free diet can expect to lead a full and healthy life*

To remain healthy, a gluten-free diet has to be followed carefully for life. For some, just a small amount of gluten will cause an immediate and violent reaction. For others, the odd indiscretion may not cause any obvious symptoms, but there will have been some internal damage to the lining of the bowel. People with untreated coeliac disease have an increased risk of developing osteoporosis and a slightly increased risk of developing bowel cancer. Studies show that following a balanced, strict gluten-free diet, with adequate calcium, can reduce this risk.

(5) As per the Advisory Committee for Borderline Substances for Gluten Sensitive Enteropathy, Coeliac Disease and Dermatitis Herpetiformis

## Useful information



Coeliac UK is the leading charity working for people with coeliac disease and dermatitis herpetiformis

The charity provides a free dietetic and food helpline and support for members via its 90+ local voluntary groups. For further information on the charity and its resources visit [www.coeliac.org.uk](http://www.coeliac.org.uk) or call the helpline on 0870 444 8804

## How to contact us



Juvella is the leading provider of gluten-free products on prescription. This leaflet is one in a series produced by the Juvella Nutrition Centre, an information and advice service on coeliac disease and gluten-free diets.

For free copies of these leaflets and information on Juvella Gluten-Free Products and Support Services please contact us via:

**Our Advice Line:** The Juvella Nutrition Centre Advice Line is open  
Monday to Friday from 9 am to 5 pm

 **UK Freephone 0800 783 1992**  
**ROI Freephone 1-800-40-50-90**

**Our Website:** Visit our website for full product information and recipe ideas  
[www.juvella.co.uk](http://www.juvella.co.uk)

**E mail us at:** [info@juvella.co.uk](mailto:info@juvella.co.uk)

**Or write to us at:** Juvella, 19 De-Havilland Drive, Liverpool L24 8RN

This leaflet has been compiled with the help and advice of Juvella's panel of medical advisors. Whilst every care has been taken to check that the dietary advice published represents current opinions, Juvella strongly recommends that anyone needing to follow a specialist diets seeks medical advice first.



*The dietary information in this leaflet has been checked by The British Dietetic Association*