

## CELIAC DISEASE

# Getting Tested

After talking about your symptoms with your doctor, tests for celiac disease may be performed. As celiac disease is a lifelong health issue, a correct diagnosis is very important.

**If you think you may have celiac disease, do not get rid of gluten from your diet until your doctor has tested you.**

### Blood Test

- A blood test is the most common test, as it is easy and can give a clear answer.
- Results often take about a week.
- A blood test to see if you have celiac disease can only work if you are eating gluten, so be sure to keep gluten in your diet before testing is done. (Only limit gluten from your diet if your doctor tells you to do so.)
- Based on the results, your gastroenterologist may wish to do an **endoscopy**.

### Endoscopy

- An endoscopy is done to get a small piece of the tissue (biopsy) from your small intestine to see if there is damage stopping your body from taking in nutrients, caused by celiac disease.
- You will be given medicine to block pain and make you feel relaxed and sleepy, so you won't feel much during the test.
- During the endoscopy, your gastroenterologist will use a long, thin (about the width of your little finger), flexible tube with a camera on the end to look inside.
- The tube is passed through the mouth into the small intestine as your gastroenterologist does a careful exam to check for damage.



- Getting a biopsy before starting a gluten-free diet gives you and your doctor proper baseline data to be used if issues come up in the future, so be sure to keep gluten in your diet before testing is done. (Only go gluten-free if your doctor tells you to do so.)
- Endoscopy is the best way to show that you have celiac disease and the best way to make sure your intestine heals the right way.
- To learn more about endoscopy, **visit [gastro.org/Patient-Care](http://gastro.org/Patient-Care)**.

*While other types of tests, such as saliva and stool tests, may be offered, these are not accurate and should not replace the blood test and endoscopy.*

## Next Steps

- ▶ *If your blood tests and endoscopy say that you have celiac disease:*
  - Your gastroenterologist will give you information on the **gluten-free diet (GFD)** to care for (and hopefully get rid of) your symptoms.
  - Your doctor will also talk with you about **testing for vitamin and mineral deficiencies** or other problems linked to celiac disease. Many celiac disease patients do not have gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms, but may have thyroid disease, anemia (too little iron in the blood), osteoporosis (weakened bones), liver disease, or females may have gynecologic issues (irregular periods and infertility).
  - Your gastroenterologist should put you in touch with a **registered dietitian (RD) to help you learn more about the GFD as you start the change in diet.**
    - Ask your doctor to suggest a dietitian skilled in celiac disease.
    - Reach out to your health insurance provider to find an RD that is covered by your plan.
    - Perform an Internet search using these helpful Google search terms to find an RD in your area:
      - “Registered dietitian”
      - “Celiac disease”
      - Your ZIP code



The information provided by the AGA Institute is not medical advice and should not be considered a replacement for seeing a medical professional.

July 2017

© AGA 2017

- ▶ *If your tests **do not** show celiac disease, some choices your doctor may give you are:*
  - Taking a gluten challenge to look for gluten intolerance. Your doctor can give you more information on how to do this and if it would be helpful.
  - Tracking your diet, which can help find other possible food allergies and intolerances, such as to lactose or fructose.

## Celiac Disease – What to Know:

- ▶ Celiac disease is a health issue in which people cannot handle a protein called gluten.
- ▶ Celiac disease causes many GI issues, among other things.
- ▶ The treatment for celiac disease is to cut out gluten and eat a gluten-free diet (GFD).
- ▶ Do not get rid of gluten in your diet until you have been tested by a doctor and then only if he or she tells you to.
- ▶ If you still have celiac symptoms after going gluten-free or would like more information, talk to your gastroenterologist.



The information provided by the AGA Institute is not medical advice and should not be considered a replacement for seeing a medical professional.

July 2017

© AGA 2017