



ATLANTIC GASTROENTEROLOGY ASSOCIATES, PA.  
Celiac Diagnostic Center

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **MAY IS CELIAC DISEASE AWARENESS MONTH**

### **What are the symptoms? What are the risk factors?**

EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP, N.J. – Celiac disease, one of the most common gastrointestinal disorders, is currently also one of the most under diagnosed. It’s a condition that affects at least 3 million Americans, or about one in 110 people. Yet only one in about 4,700 to 5,000 is diagnosed because many people don’t connect their symptoms with the disease.

Gluten is usually the cause of celiac. It’s a protein composite found in foods processed from wheat and related grain species, including barley, rye, and spelt. It is also hidden in many other foods and even cosmetics and medications.

The most common symptoms associated with celiac disease include:

- Bloating belly
- Abdominal pain
- Decreased appetite
- Diarrhea
- Lactose intolerance
- Nausea and vomiting
- Unexplained weight loss
- Dental and bone disorders (such as osteoporosis)
- Depression
- Joint pain
- Mouth sores,
- Muscle cramps
- Skin rash
- Tingling in the legs and feet

“Many people don’t realize that their stomach aches, diarrhea or bloating can indicate celiac disease,” says Barry Kaufman, MD, director of the Celiac Diagnostic Center at Atlantic Gastroenterology Associates. He adds, “Diagnosis is obviously the key to reducing symptoms and preventing complications from the disease.

“Gluten actually injures the villi, the tiny hair-like projections in the small intestine that promote digestion and then absorb nutrients from food,” Kaufman says. “

In the long term,” he adds, “this damage leads to chronic and possibly life threatening conditions including anemia, osteoporosis, infertility, some neurologic conditions and associated cancers. While there is no cure for celiac disease, it can be managed and controlled through lifestyle changes.”

Diagnosis, in most cases is a simple blood test.

A lifelong gluten-free diet is the standard treatment.

There are certain risk factors that may increase chances of contracting the disease.

These include:

- Being of northern European ancestry
- Being female
- First degree relative with celiac disease
- Type I diabetes
- Autoimmune thyroid disease
- Down syndrome
- Microscopic colitis

Severe stress from childbirth to physical injury or surgery also may activate celiac disease. Children also may be slow to grow.

If you or a loved one experiences any of these symptoms, consult your physician.

A Celiac Support Group meets from 7-9pm the third Tuesday of every month at Atlantic Gastroenterology Associates at 3205 Fire Road, Egg Harbor Township, NJ. A different speaker is featured each month. There is no cost and it's open to everyone. Please call 609.407.0220, ext. 115 for more information, or email [SHPR@comcast.net](mailto:SHPR@comcast.net). Please use the same contact information if you are interested in being a speaker at the support group.

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