

## **Celiac Disease**

Celiac disease is defined as intolerance to gluten. Gluten is a protein found in some grains such as wheat, rye, and barley. In our bodies gluten breaks down into two parts, gliadin and glutenin. For people with gluten intolerance, consuming gliadin damages the lining of their small intestines. As a result the damaged intestines cannot absorb vital nutrients from the foods consumed; this puts the person at high risk for malnutrition. People with Celiac disease are at a higher risk for lymphoma, especially if they are noncompliant with a gluten free diet.

Some of the symptoms of Celiac disease are weakness, loss of appetite, weight loss, diarrhea, and abdominal cramping. For women it be a cause of infertility and/or interfere with their menstrual cycle. For children they may not grow properly if the condition is not well managed.

Gluten intolerance can occur at any age; however it is usually diagnosed in the adult years. The primary treatment is to follow a strict eating regimen, remove all gluten/gliadin from the diet. Once gliadin is eliminated from the diet, the small intestine can heal itself. Absorption of nutrients will improve and the symptoms will resolve.