

Why test for Celiac Disease BEFORE going gluten free?

If you require a gluten free diet due to medical reasons, it is essential to first diagnose why you are reacting to wheat, rye and barley and then to follow up with a multidisciplinary team with expertise in gluten related disorders.

Note: A gluten free diet can put people at a higher risk of nutrient deficiency & weight gain.

- There are many reasons why a growing number of people feel better when they avoid wheat, rye and barley. Each reason requires unique treatment, therefore it is essential to clarify the diagnosis, before starting on a gluten free diet (GFD).
- Testing for celiac disease (CD), dermatitis herpetiformis (DH) & wheat allergies is recommended before exploring the possibility of non-celiac gluten sensitivity or FODMAP intolerances. FODMAPs are fermentable carbohydrates, which are also present in wheat, rye and barley.
- Testing for CD or DH before going gluten free :
 - Guards evidence for a clear and timely diagnosis
 - Minimizes the number and cost of tests
 - Avoids the risk of intensified symptoms while on a “gluten challenge”
 - ***Gluten challenge:** Before testing for CD or DH – NO gluten restriction is BEST OR having gluten rich foods (~ 1 ½ slices of bread/day) for at least 14 days before testing tissue transglutaminase (tTg) or having a duodenal or skin biopsy.
 - Aids in the diagnosis of CD or DH, which speeds up:
 - Compliance to a strict lifelong gluten free diet
 - Eligibility for financial aid for gluten-free living (i.e. medical tax credit)
See www.victoriaceliac.org & click on newly diagnosed section
 - Diagnosis, treatment and recovery of family
- **Most people with CD or DH have these 5 pillars of diagnosis in place:**
 1. Signs & Symptoms of CD or DH
 2. Positive tissue transglutaminase (tTg) blood test (Note: must be on *adequate gluten)
 3. Positive genetic testing (DQ2 and /or DQ8)
 4. Positive duodenal biopsy for those with CD or positive skin biopsy for those with DH (a skin manifestation of CD with itchy blisters) (Note: must be on *adequate gluten)
Duodenal biopsy should include 4-6 samples with 1-2 samples of the duodenal bulb.
 5. Improvement on a gluten free diet
- **Exceptions to these 5 pillars can occur, therefore if you have signs & symptoms suggestive of CD or DH you should discuss with your physician the possibility of testing pillars 2, 3 & 4.**
 - Normal tTg testing does not rule out CD or DH. Therefore those with a normal tTg and with signs & symptoms suggestive of CD or DH, should discuss with their physician, the possibility of testing pillars 3 & 4, while remaining on gluten. If remaining of gluten is not possible, try to challenge with *adequate gluten 14 days prior to a duodenal or skin biopsy.
 - Elevated tTg values, does not confirm the diagnosis of CD or DH.
It is therefore advisable to talk to your physician about the possibility of testing pillars 3 & 4, while remaining on adequate gluten. If remaining on gluten is not possible, try to challenge with *adequate gluten 14 days prior to a duodenal or skin biopsy.
- **If CD, DH & WA are ruled out, and you suspect a reaction to wheat, rye or barley, you should see your physician and a registered dietitian with expertise in gluten related disorders, irritable bowel syndrome and FODMAP intolerances, in order to determine the reason for your reaction to wheat, rye & barley and to clarify your unique dietary treatment.**
Your gluten restriction may not need to be strict & may only be temporary.
To see a registered dietitian with expertise in gluten related disorders, see contacts below or have your physician send a referral to Island Health at 250-727-4168

Benefits of Diagnosing Celiac Disease or Dermatitis Herpetiformis:

1. Confirms treatment : Lifelong strict gluten free diet ; Lifelong medical support ; Lifelong Canadian Celiac Association (CCA) & local celiac chapter support
2. Provides a foundation for evidence based treatment
 - A referral to a gastroenterologist or dermatologist
 - A baseline biopsy is taken and may be beneficial to compare to future biopsies in cases where tTg tests or symptoms are not normalizing.
 - An initial referral to a registered dietitian with expertise in gluten related disorders. (To see a registered dietitian with expertise in gluten related disorders, see contacts below or have your physician fax a referral to Island Health at 250-727-4168.)
 - Testing of iron status (including serum ferritin) , B12, Vitamin D status
 - Testing of Vitamin A status (for those with night blindness or chronic diarrhea)
 - Testing of bone density (for some adults)
 - Ruling out lactose intolerance, other food sensitivities or food allergies
 - Necessary follow up with family physician, gastroenterologist, dermatologist, or paediatrician and registered dietitian with expertise in gluten related disorders.
3. Helps improve compliance to treatment and long term health (i.e. preventing osteoporosis, lymphoma, nutrient deficiencies, infertility, etc....)
4. Confirms risk of other conditions, family risk & the benefits of family testing.
5. Helps provide financial aid for gluten free living (i.e. medical tax credit , possibly future drugs)

References

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