

Don't just go gluten-free: Here's why you *need* to be tested first

You must be on a regular, gluten-containing diet to be accurately tested for celiac disease. Going gluten-free before being tested can prevent diagnosis since the blood test measures antibodies. If you have celiac disease and are not eating gluten, antibodies may not show up on the blood test and can give the appearance of a negative test result.

5 reasons you *need* to be tested for celiac disease:

1. Celiac disease, a lifelong condition, runs in families. After one family member is diagnosed, testing for celiac disease should be considered for 1st and 2nd degree relatives.
2. Without help from a professional, you may still be unknowingly consuming gluten. A dietitian skilled in the gluten-free diet will help to ensure there are no hidden sources of gluten in your diet.
3. Celiac disease, a serious genetic autoimmune condition, requires that you and your medical provider develop a plan for long-term follow-up care. This includes regularly testing your celiac disease antibodies, assessing your risk of developing conditions associated with celiac disease, and checking for nutritional deficiencies to avoid future complications.
4. Securing an official celiac disease diagnosis helps researchers to advance the field of celiac disease so that we can continue to improve the quality of life for all patients.
5. An official diagnosis made by a medical provider will help you know for sure if gluten is the cause of your symptoms and whether long-term, total gluten

avoidance is necessary for the improvement and maintenance of your health.

So, you've already gone gluten-free? You can still get tested!

If you continue eating a gluten-free diet during the testing process, your test results will not be accurate. Talk to your doctor about the **gluten challenge** to get the most accurate results.

What is the gluten challenge?

The patient resumes eating gluten for a defined period of time (up to 8 weeks), followed by blood tests and/or biopsy to check for disease activity.

The gluten challenge seems risky. Is it safe for someone who thinks they have celiac disease?

The gluten challenge is accepted within the medical community, but should be closely monitored by a doctor skilled in celiac disease. If you have specific concerns, it is always best to ask your doctor for further guidance.

How long does a gluten challenge need to last in order to be sure that testing for celiac disease is accurate?

There is ongoing research in this area. So far, the results have shown that the gluten challenge may be able to be shortened to two slices of gluten-containing bread per day for at least two weeks, though more research is necessary.



For more information on the gluten challenge and getting tested, visit our website www.celiaccentral.org/gettested