



HEALTH AWARENESS

Celiac Disease: More Than A Digestive Illness

(NAPSA)—Bread, pancakes, pretzels, pizza—the only thing most people fear about these foods is the calories, unless they have celiac disease. The wheat used to make these foods contains a protein called gluten. When people with celiac disease eat gluten, they can feel a host of uncomfortable and potentially severe symptoms. More than 2 million people in the United States are estimated to have celiac disease, but most don't know it.

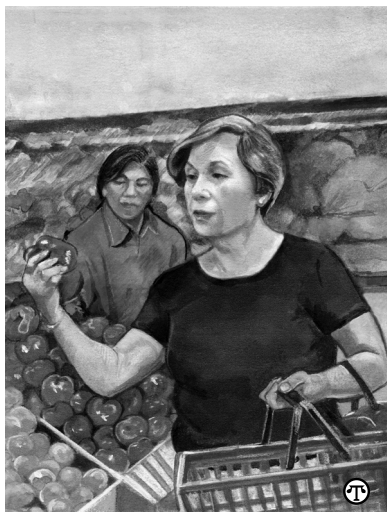
People with celiac disease cannot tolerate gluten, which is found in wheat, barley, rye and many foods made with these grains. Medications, lipstick and even Play-Doh may contain gluten. When people with celiac disease consume gluten-containing foods, their immune system attacks and damages the lining of the small intestine. The damaged intestine then can't adequately absorb nutrients from food.

Most people think celiac disease is just a digestive illness—one that causes diarrhea, nausea, cramping and weight loss. But celiac disease can also affect other body systems, such as the reproductive, skeletal and nervous systems.

Other symptoms of celiac disease include:

- tooth discoloration
- an itchy skin rash called dermatitis herpetiformis
- depression or anxiety
- infertility or a recurrent miscarriage
- bone and joint pain

Although celiac disease currently has no cure, in most cases it can be successfully treated by adhering to a gluten-free diet. To stay healthy, people with celiac disease must avoid gluten for the



Doctors say people with celiac disease can feel better with the right diet.

rest of their lives. Some people with celiac disease have severe reactions to even small amounts of gluten, while others have more mild symptoms.

Anyone experiencing symptoms that could be related to celiac disease should see a doctor. Doctors will perform blood tests and an intestinal biopsy to confirm a celiac disease diagnosis. A person experiencing symptoms of celiac disease should continue to eat a diet that contains gluten before being tested, or detecting the disease may be difficult, possibly even leading to misdiagnosis.

For More Information

Visit the National Institutes of Health Celiac Disease Awareness Campaign web site at www.celiac.nih.gov for more information and free publications about celiac disease.