



Breakthroughs In The GF World

There's a lot we still don't know about celiac disease, from exactly why some people develop it to how to restore tolerance to gluten. Fortunately, there's lots we do know, too, thanks to research efforts across the globe. In honour of the upcoming Celiac Awareness Month in May, I thought I'd recap some of what we now know about the disease as well as some important new developments in the gluten-free world.

GROWING NUMBERS Celiac disease is definitely on the rise. A 2010 study conducted by well-known celiac experts Dr. Alessio Fasano and Dr. Carlo Catassi found that over the past 30 years, the prevalence of celiac disease among adults in the United States has increased fivefold, doubling every 15 years.

YOUNG AND OLD The study, published in the *Annals of Medicine*, also revealed that celiac disease can develop at any age. In fact, the incidence increased as individuals got older, with a significant number losing their tolerance to gluten by their 50s or 60s. An earlier study out of Finland found the prevalence of celiac disease in the elderly is 2.45 per cent – higher than that of the general population. Why does the disease often develop in later in life? Fasano believes it may be due to environmental factors, as well as changes in the bacteria that live in our digestive tracts.

DOUBLE TROUBLE Studies are finding that celiac disease occurs more frequently in people with other conditions, such as autoimmune thyroid disease, Down syndrome and Type 1 diabetes.

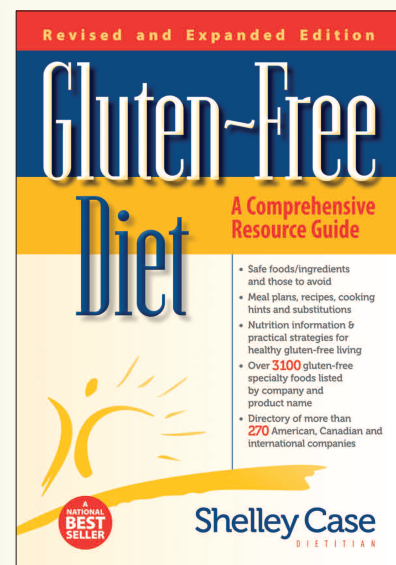
SIMPLY SENSITIVE Emerging research reveals that people can be intolerant to gluten without having celiac disease or wheat allergy. This disorder, called gluten sensitivity, has historically been met with skepticism. But Fasano presented data at the American Dietetic Association conference establishing gluten sensitivity as a legitimate and distinct clinical condition. His findings are illuminating: 6 percent of 5,896 patients at his Center for Celiac Research fulfill the criteria for gluten sensitivity, but not celiac disease or wheat allergy. Symptoms included abdominal pain, diarrhea, headache, “foggy mind,” numbness in extremities, joint pain, eczema or rash, depression and anemia.

Shelley Case, RD, is an international celiac nutrition expert, consulting dietitian and the author of Gluten-Free Diet: A Comprehensive Resource Guide (available online at www.glutenfreediet.ca). She is on the advisory boards of the Canadian Celiac Assoc., the Celiac Disease Foundation and the Gluten-Free Intolerance Group. Shelley takes reader questions at Allergicliving.com.

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- Tips for eating out
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- New food and GF labeling regulations in the U.S., Canada, Europe and Australia/NZ, as well as the international Codex Alimentarius
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