



**UVA Nutrition Services**

**UVA Digestive  
Health Center**

## What is Celiac Disease?

Celiac disease (CD) is a genetically determined condition in which gluten (the specific types of protein found in wheat [gliadin], rye [secalin] and barley [hordein]), illicit an autoimmune response that damages the lining of the small intestine. If prolonged and untreated, malabsorption of nutrients can occur. Once thought to be a rare condition, CD is now thought to affect as many as 1:100 people in the US.

**Signs & Symptoms:** Celiac disease may affect many organs and systems. The symptoms vary with individuals and may include diarrhea, gas, bloating, vomiting, constipation, nausea, skin irritation (“dermatitis herpetiformis”), weight loss, anemia, infertility, fatigue, weakness, headaches, concentration and memory problems. Malabsorption caused by CD can have serious effects. Many patients, however, do not experience these symptoms.

**Diagnosis:** The diagnostic criteria for CD are very clear and specific. Initial screening is done by a blood test, usually tissue transglutaminase-IgA (tTG-IgA). If the test is positive, then a small intestine biopsy should be done by a gastroenterologist. A positive small intestine biopsy, followed by return of health after adhering to a gluten-free diet will confirm the diagnosis of CD.

**Treatment:** It is important to confirm diagnosis of CD before beginning treatment. The only treatment for CD is lifelong elimination of gluten from the diet. Consult a physician for diagnosis and a dietitian trained in CD for dietary treatment guidelines.

The University of Virginia Health System offers physician and nutrition counseling for patients with celiac disease.

Please visit the website for more information about these services:

<http://uvahealth.com/services/digestive-health-1>

Call 434-924-2959 to schedule an appointment.

Meeting with a registered dietitian can be the key to your success on the gluten-free diet! A physician referral is required to schedule an appointment, so ask your physician for a GI Nutrition referral. For more nutrition and support group information, visit: [www.uvahealth.com/ceciacsupport](http://www.uvahealth.com/ceciacsupport).