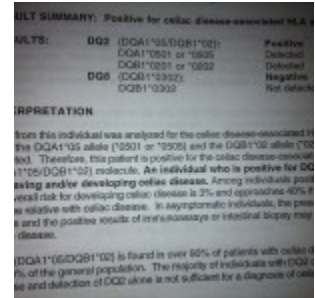


The Celiac Testing Lowdown

Having a peanut allergy and gluten intolerance as a Registered Dietitian (RD) spawns a lot of interesting conversations. Sometimes it is easier not to tell strangers that you are a RD or you end up getting into long debates about nutrition. However, when I am asked about **testing methods for celiac disease** I like to make sure that people understand their options which really depends on whether they are currently consuming gluten or not. Celiac is an autoimmune digestive disease related to gluten. Gluten is a protein found in wheat, barley, rye, and triticale. Gluten is in many foods that people don't usually think of such as in beer or traditional soy sauce. Some people with undiagnosed celiac disease have gastrointestinal symptoms such as bloating, diarrhea, gas, or constipation. There are many other symptoms as well including feeling fatigued, depressed or low- see this [checklist](#). Some persons do not have many or any easily identified symptoms. Many persons are undiagnosed.



If you are still eating wheat and/or other gluten containing foods and you think you have celiac disease then you can ask your doctor about the standard screening for celiac disease. Standard [screening tests](#) are usually the first step in screening and look for your body's response to eating gluten in terms of autoantibodies. Basically, if you have celiac disease your body knows that the gluten is hurting your body produces the autoantibodies. The antibodies are called anti-tissue transglutaminase (tTG), anti-endomysium (EMA); and anti-deamidated gliadin peptides (DGP). If you already took gluten out of your diet then the standard screening is not a reliable way to determine if you have celiac disease or are at risk.

If you have a **positive screening test** or you are still having symptoms and have a negative screening test then you should see a gastroenterologist (a doctor) who specializes in celiac disease. Often the doctors will recommend an intestinal biopsy to see if there is damage to the villi in the small intestine and then confirm the diagnosis. **To find a gastroenterologist**, ask your primary care doctor or family and friends for a referral, check with your health insurance carrier for network gastroenterologists, or [search here](#).

Genetic testing is a great option for a variety of situations. One pretty much needs to have the celiac genes or genetic potential to have celiac disease, however having the genes does not mean you have celiac disease. These genes are **HLA-DQ2 or HLA-DQ8**. Almost 1/3 of our population has celiac genes. If you have a family member with celiac disease genetic testing is often recommended. If you have been gluten free due to suspected celiac and feel better, but want to know if you have celiac disease then a genetic test is an option to get more information. Many people I have talked with do not want to reintroduce gluten just to have the screening test when they feel better without eating it. If you have **certain other autoimmune diseases such as hashimoto's or type 1 diabetes you are at higher risk for celiac disease**. I know as I have hashimoto's autoimmune thyroid and have the HLA-DQ2 gene. I have been gluten free for one year. More on hashimoto's and gluten in a future blog post!

Some people have what they call **"gluten sensitivity"** which is different than celiac disease, but has the same treatment of avoiding gluten. Avoiding gluten is much easier these days, but is still very challenging. It is not always healthier either and can cost more money. Many people will recommend only going gluten free

if it is a medical necessity. It is an individual choice, but having lived with dietary restrictions my whole life I would say don't restrict yourself if you don't have to. I would love to be able to eat without restrictions!

[Quest Diagnostics](#) has a test center menu online and as well as [LabCorp](#). Search for celiac and you can see the tests they offer. Both test centers offer screening and genetic tests. Many other labs offer celiac testing as well.

ALWAYS keep a copy of your test results.

Be Well,

Lori