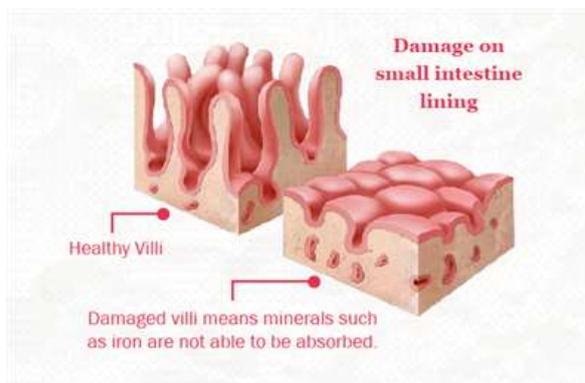


WHAT IS COELIAC DISEASE

Coeliac disease is a condition in which the body's immune system reacts to gluten. Gluten is a protein found in foods made from **wheat, barley, rye** and **oats**.

As a result of your body's reaction to gluten, the lining of the small bowel (intestine) becomes damaged and inflamed. This causes flattening of the tiny finger like projections, called villi, which line the inside of the bowel. This damage reduces the surface area of the bowel, interfering with the absorption of nutrients from food. This can lead to vitamin and mineral deficiencies.



A number of serious health consequences can result if the condition is not diagnosed and treated properly. Currently the only treatment is following a strict gluten free diet.

Coeliac disease is hereditary, however both genetic and environmental factors can play an important role in coeliac disease. It is estimated that 1 in 70 New Zealanders have coeliac disease, however up to 80% of those are unaware they have the condition.

Symptoms

Symptoms in coeliac disease can vary. These symptoms are generally a result of the inflammation in the bowel or nutritional deficiencies. It is worth noting that up to 20% of those with coeliac disease may not experience any symptoms, despite visible damage to the small intestine. Therefore it is still extremely important they follow a strict gluten free diet.

- Diarrhoea and/or constipation
- Fatigue, weakness, lethargy
- Anaemia – iron or folic acid deficiency
- Flatulence, cramping and bloating
- Nausea and vomiting
- Osteoporosis and/or bone or joint pain
- Weight loss or poor weight gain and/or growth in children
- Easy bruising of the skin and/or hair loss
- Ulcerations and/or swelling of mouth and tongue
- Miscarriages and infertility
- Muscle spasms
- B12, A, D, E and K vitamin deficiency
- Skin rashes such as Dermatitis Herpetiformis
- Neurological issues
- Difficulty concentrating and irritability

Treatment

Coeliac disease is treated by a **life-long gluten free diet**. Avoidance of the cause of the disease will allow the small bowel to recover completely in most people.

If you would like more support in managing coeliac disease, contact a Healthy Foundations dietitian.

References:

[1] <http://www.coeliac.org.nz/> [2] <http://www.coeliac.org.au/> [3] <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/nutrition>