

# Celiac Disease in Children: A Practical Diagnosis and Management Guide

Symptoms, testing (while eating gluten), and the day-to-day gluten-free plan.

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## Quick note:

This guide is for general education. It cannot diagnose your child. If you are worried, trust your instincts and seek medical care.

## What celiac disease is

Celiac disease is an immune reaction to gluten (in wheat, barley, and rye) that damages the small intestine. It can cause gut symptoms, growth problems, anemia, and fatigue. Some children have subtle or no gut symptoms.

- bullet It is not a food preference and not the same as non-celiac gluten sensitivity.
- bullet The treatment is a strict lifelong gluten-free diet after diagnosis.

## Common symptoms in children

- bullet Chronic belly pain, bloating, diarrhea or constipation.
- bullet Poor growth, weight loss, or delayed puberty.
- bullet Iron deficiency anemia, fatigue, irritability.
- bullet Mouth ulcers, nausea, vomiting (selected), dental enamel defects.
- bullet Skin rash (dermatitis herpetiformis - less common in kids).

## How testing works (important)

Testing is only accurate if your child is eating gluten regularly. Do not start a gluten-free diet before testing unless your clinician tells you to.

- bullet Initial blood test often includes tissue transglutaminase IgA (tTG-IgA) plus total IgA.
- bullet If IgA is low, alternative tests are used (your clinician will guide).
- bullet In selected children, diagnosis may be possible without biopsy using strict criteria (specialist-led).

## After diagnosis: the practical plan

- bullet Work with a dietitian experienced in pediatric celiac disease.
- bullet Learn label reading and cross-contamination prevention (toasters, cutting boards, shared spreads).
- bullet Screen and treat nutritional deficiencies (iron, vitamin D, others as guided).
- bullet Follow-up blood tests to confirm healing and diet adherence.
- bullet Inform school/daycare and family; create safe routines.

## Who should be screened even without symptoms

- bullet First-degree relatives (parent, sibling, child) of a person with celiac disease.
- bullet Type 1 diabetes.
- bullet Autoimmune thyroid disease.
- bullet Down syndrome, Turner syndrome, selective IgA deficiency.

## Key sources (for clinicians and curious parents)

These are major guideline-style references used to shape recommendations. Your clinician may follow local protocols.

- bullet [ESPGHAN guideline: Diagnosis of coeliac disease in children and adolescents \(includes no-biopsy pathway under strict criteria\)](#).
- bullet [NASPGHAN celiac disease clinical resources for families](#).

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