

What is the difference between celiac sprue and gluten sensitivity?

Gluten sensitivity implies that a person's immune system is intolerant of gluten in the diet and is forming antibodies or displaying some other evidence of an inflammatory reaction. When these reactions cause small intestinal damage visible on a biopsy, the syndrome has been called celiac sprue, celiac disease, or gluten sensitive enteropathy. (Non-tropical sprue and idiopathic steatorrhea are other terms that have been used for this disorder in the past.) The clinical definition of celiac sprue also usually requires that there is clinical and/or pathologic improvement following a gluten-free diet.

In the past, celiac sprue could only be diagnosed after somebody developed certain symptoms like diarrhea, weight loss, or growth failure in children. A biopsy would be performed and if abnormal and typical of celiac sprue, and if a gluten free diet brought resolution of diarrhea, weight gain, or growth, only then would a diagnosis of celiac sprue be made. However, recent advances in diagnostic screening tests and application of these tests to people at heightened risk or to general populations have allowed detection of celiac sprue, sometimes even before damage to villi has occurred. This latter scenario is often called gluten sensitivity

What is the difference between Wheat Allergy and Wheat Intolerance?

Wheat Allergy is a severe sudden onset allergic reaction to a certain protein component of wheat. That is, it's an auto-immune response of the body. Usual symptoms are immediate coughing, asthma, breathing difficulties, and/or projectile vomiting. It can cause life-threatening responses in allergic people. Fortunately, true wheat allergy is quite rare (less than 1/2 % of population). These people must observe a strict wheat-free diet to remain healthy.

Most people who speak of wheat allergy are really referring to wheat intolerance caused by gluten - a very complex protein found in wheat and some other grains. It affects one in seven people or 15%.

Wheat Intolerance (Gluten intolerance)

Wheat Intolerance is when you have difficulty digesting wheat, which may seem less important. It is a slower onset but certainly involves the immune system.

Gluten intolerance appears as chronic symptoms like aching joints, gastro-intestinal problems, depression, eczema, low blood iron levels and others.

Wheat intolerance caused by Gluten (contained in wheat, rye barley and oats) is associated with serious health risks like diabetes, bowel cancer, anemia and osteoporosis.