

Prevalence of celiac appears steady but followers of gluten-free diet increase

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More people are eating gluten-free, although the prevalence of celiac disease appears to have remained stable in recent years, according to an article published online by *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

Hyun-seok Kim, M.D., M.P.H., of the Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, Newark, and coauthors analyzed data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys (NHANES) 2009 to 2014. There were 22,278 individuals over the age of 6 who participated in the surveys who underwent blood tests for celiac for whom information about prior diagnosis of [celiac disease](#) and adherence to a gluten-free diet was collected in a direct interview.

Overall, 106 (0.69 percent) individuals had a celiac disease diagnosis and 213 (1.08 percent) were identified as adhering to a gluten-free diet although they didn't have celiac disease, according to the results reported in a research letter.

Those numbers correlated to an estimated 1.76 million people with celiac disease and 2.7 million people who adhere to a gluten-free diet even though they don't have celiac disease in the United States.

While the prevalence of celiac disease appears to have remained steady overall (0.70 percent in 2009-2010, 0.77 percent in 2011-2012 and 0.58 percent in 2013-2014), adherence to a gluten-free diet by people without celiac disease has increased over time (0.52 percent in 2009-2010, 0.99 percent in 2011-2012 and 1.69 percent in 2013-2014), the authors report.

The two trends may be related because decreased gluten consumption could be contributing to the plateau in celiac disease, according to the report.

Limitations of the study include the small numbers of people participating in NHANES who were

identified as having a diagnosis of celiac disease and as adhering to a gluten-free diet without celiac disease.

The report concludes the growing interest in a [gluten-free diet](#) by [people](#) without celiac disease could be due to a variety of factors, including public perception that it may be healthier, the growing availability of gluten-free products, and a self-diagnosis of [gluten sensitivity](#) by some individuals.

More information: *JAMA Intern Med*. Published online September 6, 2016. [DOI: 10.1001/jamainternmed.2016.5254](#)

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