Celiac disease screening for family members

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Celiac disease is an immune reaction to eating gluten. A recent Mayo Clinic study found that this autoimmune disease tends to run in families. Researchers say screening family members of celiac disease patients could prevent long-term complications, such as nutritional deficiencies, development of new autoimmune conditions and small bowel

malignancy.

If one member of a family has celiac disease, there is a likelihood that other members will be affected, as well, says Dr. Joseph Murray, a Mayo Clinic gastroenterologist

"Family members who have somebody in a family with celiac disease are much more likely to have celiac disease than the general population."

Gluten, a protein in wheat, barley and rye, can cause damage in the intestine for those with celiac disease. Common symptoms include abdominal pain, diarrhea, bloating, excess gas, fatigue, anemia and vitamin deficiencies.

Murray says because of the genetic component, family members should consider being screened.

"You can do a blood test, and the blood test, if it's positive, indicates a likelihood of celiac disease," says Murray.

Avoiding gluten is the only treatment. It can be found in many products—obvious and not.

"It's in the pastas, the bread, the pizza, but also sauces, marinades, flavor additives."

If you have symptoms and think you might have celiac disease, Murray says to get tested before changing your diet.

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