Could it be Celiac Disease?

Celiac disease is an autoimmune disorder that often runs in families. When someone with celiac disease eats gluten, the protein found in wheat, barley and rye, the body causes an immune attack on the intestinal lining. This harms the lining and prevents nutrients from being absorbed into the body. Some people have symptoms that affect the skin. Others have symptoms that affect the organs or organ systems of the body, and some have no symptoms at all.

Some breakthrough findings were made in 2011. Research found that celiac disease is just one piece in a spectrum of gluten-related disorders. The spectrum also includes non-celiac gluten sensitivity, which has many of the same symptoms as celiac disease, and wheat allergy.

What are the symptoms of celiac disease?

There are more than 300 symptoms of celiac disease, and symptoms can vary from person to person. Some individuals develop symptoms early in life, while others feel healthy far into adulthood. Some people with celiac disease have no signs or symptoms at all. These differences make it difficult to diagnose celiac disease. As many as 95% of people with celiac disease may be undiagnosed or misdiagnosed with other conditions.

Celiac disease can affect many systems of the body, resulting in a variety of symptoms. Some include:

- **General:**
  - Anemia
  - Fatigue
  - Irritability
  - Failure to thrive

- **Central Nervous System:**
  - Depression
  - Ataxia (lack of muscle coordination)
  - Developmental delays
  - Seizures

- **Skin and Mucosal Systems:**
  - Dermatitis herpetiformis, an intensely itchy and chronic rash found primarily on elbows, knees, buttocks, back, and back of neck.
  - Alopecia, loss of hair from the head or body.
  - Aphthous stomatitis, or recurrent canker sores.

- **Gastrointestinal System:**
  - Diarrhea
  - Constipation
  - Abdominal pain or bloating
  - Vomiting
  - Malnutrition
  - Weight loss or weight gain
  - Cancers

QuestDiagnostics.com/celiac
Reproductive System:
- Infertility (male and female)
- Miscarriages
- Delayed puberty

Muscular Skeletal and Dental Systems
- Osteopenia and osteoporosis
- Short stature
- Dental enamel defects
- Arthritis.

What else puts you at risk for having celiac disease?
If you have a family member that has celiac disease you are also at risk for developing this disease. Your chances of having celiac disease is higher than a person in the general population.

Frequency of celiac disease:
In average healthy people: 1 in 133
In first-degree relatives (parent, sibling, child): 1 in 22
In second-degree relatives (aunt, uncle, grandparent, niece, nephew, cousin or half-sibling): 1 in 39

If you have certain other conditions, such as another autoimmune disease, your risk for having celiac disease is higher. These can include:
- Type 1 diabetes
- Thyroid disease
- Sjögren’s disease
- Juvenile idiopathic arthritis
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Peripheral neuropathy
- Down syndrome
- Turner syndrome
- Williams syndrome
- IgA deficiency

Get more information on symptoms of celiac disease, including the option to determine your risk for having this condition, by completing a Celiac Symptoms Checklist.

What are the symptoms of non-celiac gluten sensitivity?
Non-celiac gluten sensitivity has many of the same symptoms as celiac disease. But, early research shows that individuals with non-celiac gluten sensitivity have more of their symptoms outside of the digestive tract, such as:
- Chronic fatigue
- Headache
- Foggy mind
- Joint or bone pain
- Leg numbness

Symptoms usually appear hours or days after eating gluten. One important thing to know about non-celiac gluten sensitivity is that currently there are no tests to help diagnose the condition. One of the steps to diagnose non-celiac gluten sensitivity is to rule out both wheat allergy and celiac disease.

What are the symptoms of wheat allergy?
Some researchers feel that wheat allergy is included in the gluten-related disorders spectrum. To learn more about the symptoms of allergies, including wheat allergy, click here.

Next Steps
If you think you might have a gluten-related disorder, it’s important that you speak with your doctor first. He or she will then guide you through the diagnostic process. It’s important that you keep eating a regular, gluten-containing diet. This will help to ensure that the diagnostic process is carried out accurately. We can teach you about how gluten-related disorders are diagnosed so that you can have a jumpstart.