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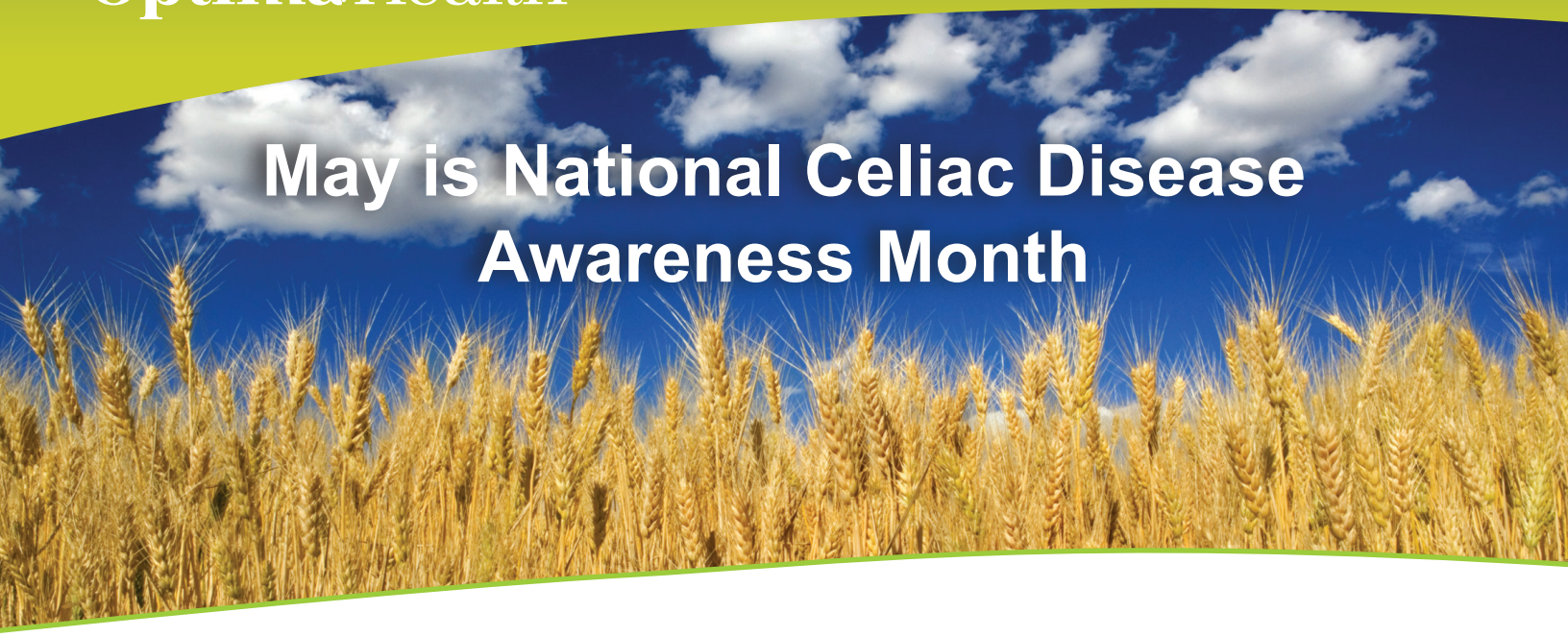
Optima Health

Healthy Habits



May is National Celiac Disease Awareness Month

About Celiac Disease

Celiac disease is a digestive disease that damages the small intestine and interferes with the absorption of nutrients from food. People who have celiac disease cannot tolerate gluten, a protein in wheat, rye, and barley. Gluten is found mainly in foods but may also be found in everyday products such as medicines, vitamins, and lip balms.

Facts

- Without treatment, people with celiac disease may develop complications such as osteoporosis, anemia, and cancer.
- A person with celiac disease may or may not exhibit symptoms.
- Diagnosis involves blood tests and may include a biopsy of the small intestine.
- Celiac disease is hereditary, therefore family members of a person with celiac disease may wish to be tested.

Symptoms

- Abdominal bloating and pain
- Chronic diarrhea
- Pale, foul-smelling, or fatty stool
- Vomiting
- Constipation
- Weight loss

Risk Factors

People with celiac disease tend to have other diseases in which the immune system attacks the body's healthy cells and tissues. The connection between celiac disease and these diseases may be genetic:

- Type 1 diabetes
- Autoimmune thyroid disease
- Autoimmune liver disease
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Addison's disease, a condition in which the glands that produce critical hormones are damaged
- Sjögren's syndrome, a condition in which the glands that produce tears and saliva are destroyed

Celiac disease is genetic, meaning it runs in families. Sometimes the disease is triggered—or becomes active for the first time—after surgery, pregnancy, childbirth, viral infection, or severe emotional stress.

Even though there is no cure for celiac disease, you can effectively manage it by eliminating all gluten from your diet. A gluten-free diet is a lifetime requirement. A registered dietitian can teach people with celiac disease about food selection, label reading, and other strategies to help manage the disease. For additional information, please visit http://www.celiac.nih.gov.