Level One

Screening: Importance of Early Diagnosis in Celiac Disease

KEY POINTS:

• Many symptoms of celiac disease can appear to be the same as other disorders so it can be hard to get the right diagnosis.

• It is getting easier to find out if you have celiac disease. We now have simple blood tests to check for celiac disease but these can only work if you are still on a diet containing gluten. If you think you have celiac disease, do not start a gluten-free diet before talking to your doctor.

• If celiac disease is not treated, it can lead to other diseases. This includes diseases which can develop when your body does not get proper nutrition, such as osteoporosis (weak bones), anemia (low iron), or low vitamin levels. It can also lead to more serious diseases, like lymphoma (cancer of white blood cells). It is important to get diagnosed as soon as possible to avoid these and other diseases.¹

• Since celiac disease is hereditary, family members of people with celiac disease are more likely to have celiac disease. In general, all children with a close relative with celiac disease should be tested regularly. Some experts think that everyone with this risk should be tested. Other experts think that if adults do not have symptoms, they do not need to be tested. Your doctor can help you decide if you should be screened and how often.²,³

TAKE HOME MESSAGES:
1. Doctors are learning more about celiac disease to make it easier to find out if you have it.
2. If you think you might have celiac disease because you have symptoms, do not change your diet. You should see a doctor who understands celiac disease as soon as possible to be tested.
3. If someone in your family has celiac disease you should talk to your doctor about being tested.

References: