

Published January 6th, 2010

Bread: Staff of Life, or Slice of Illness?

By Dr. Theresa Tsingis, DCMS



istockphoto

discovered in the intestinal wall which transports the gluten in genetically susceptible individuals. Zonulin seems to draw gluten proteins out of the gut and the ensuing immune response reaction seems to damage the gut wall further.

Also newly discovered is that an increasing number of conditions are no longer as straightforward as originally believed. These seemingly isolated, specific, diagnosable problems have begun to be viewed as originating from an "asymptomatic" intestinal reaction to gluten. A few of these diseases currently thought to be part of this process are: eczema, asthma, diabetes 1 and 2, thyroid disease, osteoporosis, anemia, irritable bowel syndrome and some learning disorders. In fact, the reclassification of many common conditions as autoimmune produces a large laundry list, with over 150 diseases in tow.

If there are autoimmune conditions in the family gene pool, it may well be worth determining if prevention merits a gluten free approach. In Part 2 of this article (to be published in an upcoming issue) I will address the topics of testing for gluten sensitivity, the value of predictive autoantibodies, and how to begin a gluten-free life. Thousands have done it. The trickling awareness of the need for a wider variety of gluten free products is expanding, as are the available food choices. Stay tuned!



Humankind has, for thousands of years, rhapsodized about wheat. "Breaking bread" with loved ones is one of the great joys of life, is it not? We strive to be good "breadwinners," working to put "bread on the table," and saving "dough" for a rainy day. Memories of fresh bread baking are "ingrained" in our minds, olfactory organs and hearts. You've got the idea. What then, is the problem with wheat and its cousin grains that have been put on tables for thousands of years? The answer is – that for many, a subtle intolerance to gluten and related proteins found in wheat, barley and rye can lead to autoimmune disease. An astounding volume of medical research points to a process in which gluten leaks out of the gut, causing an allergic type of response and a cascade of inflammatory and autoimmune reactions. Over time, tissues and organs become slowly damaged and autoimmune conditions develop. This process can occur even without noticeable gastrointestinal symptoms.

As gluten is allowed to escape out of the digestive tract and into the general circulation, it is perceived as a foreign invader by the immune system. Normally this entry into blood would not occur, but a protein called zonulin has been

Theresa Tsingis, DCMS is a nutrition doctor specializing in functional medicine, a branch of nutrition aimed at prevention and research. Her practice, Lamorinda Nutrition, is located at: 251 Lafayette Circle, Suite 240, Lafayette CA 94549. Dr. Tsingis can be reached at 925.283.WELL (9355) or: drtsingis@comcast.net.

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA