



# Celiac Disease and Psychology

Mi-Young Rye, PhD  
Clinical Psychologist  
June 7, 2015

# Psychological Considerations

- Diagnosis
- Adherence to a gluten-free diet
- When to seek psychological care

# Diagnosis

- Neurological and psychiatric symptoms that may be present:
  - difficulties with attention and concentration
  - anxiety
  - depressed mood
  - increased irritability
  - fatigue
  - abdominal pain
  - appetite and weight changes
  - sleep changes

# Diagnosis (continued)

- Diagnosis experience:
  - Often misdiagnosed and/or takes a long time
  - May be unexpected
  - Misperceptions and inaccurate information about celiac disease and sensitivity to gluten
- Developmentally-appropriate understanding is important

# Adherence to a gluten-free diet

- Impact on individual and family
- Preparing and planning
  - Eating at home
  - Eating out
- Creating supports around you (school, social, work, etc.)

# Adherence to a gluten-free diet (continued)

- Identify potential barriers to adherence
  - Knowledge about celiac disease or sensitivity to gluten
  - Access to gluten-free foods and products
  - Skills acquisition
    - reading labels, scanning ingredients
    - knowledge about cross-contamination
    - finding resources
  - Navigating social situations
    - Social assertiveness (asking questions about food, saying no to foods with gluten, fielding questions about gluten-free diet)
    - Social isolation (cupcakes and pizza)

# When to seek psychological care

- Difficulties accepting diagnosis, or coping with diagnosis
  - Refusal to acknowledge diagnosis
  - Chronic problems adhering to a gluten-free diet
- Significant changes in school or social-related behaviors
  - School refusal
  - Academic decline
  - Social withdrawal

# When to seek psychological care (continued)

- Changes in emotional and behavioral presentation
  - Significant changes in: eating, appetite, energy, concentration
  - Severe anxiety
  - Prolonged sad mood, or big shifts in mood
  - Increased irritability
  - No longer enjoying activities
  - Socially isolated
  - Hopelessness
  - Thoughts of harming self or others