

Undiagnosed Celiac Disease Can Lead to While

links between [celiac disease and infertility](#) in women are pretty well-established, there's been far less research into any connection between celiac disease and male infertility.

However, from the scant research that's been done, it appears that there is a link between celiac disease and male infertility - just like in women who have the condition, men who have undiagnosed celiac disease seem to suffer from infertility more often than other men.

Celiac Disease and Male Infertility Research

Men with undiagnosed celiac disease seem to have much higher rates of abnormal sperm, along with abnormal hormonal levels.

Specifically, one study found that more than 19% of married celiac men had infertile marriages, and semen analysis found problems with their sperm's [morphology](#) and [motility](#), or the sperm's structure and ability to move around.

In fact, sperm motility was reduced "markedly" in two out of three celiacs with infertile marriages, the study found.

In addition, another study found that men with undiagnosed celiac disease suffered more frequently from [androgen resistance](#), which means their bodies didn't respond properly to the male hormone testosterone. Researchers hypothesized that the androgen resistance reflected an overall disruption of the men's endocrine systems caused by celiac disease.

Male Infertility and the Gluten-Free Diet

Studies on celiac disease and male infertility have found that sperm characteristics improved once the men involved were diagnosed with celiac disease and adopted the gluten-free diet. They also found that hormone levels returned to normal after the men started the gluten-free diet.

Therefore, it's possible that celiac men who previously had been infertile can become fertile once they start the gluten-free diet, which frequently happens with celiac women. However, there hasn't been much research to show this is true. Most of the studies on fertility in celiac men were performed in the 1970s and 80s, indicating a huge unmet need for updated information.

Testing for Celiac Disease in Infertile Men

So if you're a man with unexplained infertility, should you be tested for celiac disease? Some physicians say yes, especially if you have other [celiac disease symptoms](#).

However, many people who test positive for celiac disease have few or even no obvious symptoms, so you shouldn't necessarily rely on your symptoms to determine your risk for the condition.

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Infertility

Fertility Often Returns After Starting the Gluten-Free Diet

By [Jane Anderson](#)

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Undiagnosed or untreated [celiac disease](#) can lead to a host of seemingly unrelated problems, including [osteoporosis](#), [depression](#) and [anemia](#). Now medical researchers - along with some observant obstetrician-gynecologists - are realizing that undiagnosed celiac disease also may be a major cause of otherwise unexplained [infertility](#) in both men and women.

Infertility in Celiac Disease May Be Linked to Malnutrition, Malabsorption

Many doctors define infertility as the inability to get pregnant after one year of unprotected sex. In women, fertility difficulties often result from a problem with [ovulation](#), while in men, infertility usually occurs because the man doesn't produce enough [sperm](#), or produces abnormal sperm.

It's not clear why more people with undiagnosed or untreated celiac disease suffer from infertility. It's possible that [malnutrition](#) resulting from malabsorption of nutrients in your food may be to blame, or there may be some yet-undiscovered reason.

Several Studies Find High Rates of Infertility in Women with Celiac Disease

Medical studies have found celiac disease rates of about 4% in women with unexplained infertility. In one study, which found four cases of celiac disease in a group of 98 women with unexplained infertility, none of the celiac women had extensive malabsorption, but two suffered from iron deficiency anemia.

Another study looked at the rate of children born to patients with celiac disease compared to children born to control subjects. It found that women with celiac disease had significantly fewer children prior to diagnosis - 1.9 children, on average, compared to 2.5 children in controls. After the women were diagnosed with celiac disease, the difference began to even out. The researchers concluded that celiac disease caused the difference in fertility prior to diagnosis, while [the gluten-free diet](#) corrected it following diagnosis.

Fewer medical studies have been conducted looking for male reproductive issues in celiac disease. However, Italian researchers have noted that male celiac disease patients have a greater risk of infertility and other reproductive issues, as well as a greater incidence of [androgen](#) (male hormone) deficiency.

Women with Celiac Disease Frequently Suffer from Menstrual Abnormalities

In women with celiac disease, [menstrual disorders are commonplace](#), suggesting some potential reasons for infertility.

For example, in another Italian study, nearly 20% of the celiac women had [amenorrhea](#), or missed menstrual periods. Only 2.2% of the control subjects suffered from amenorrhea.

Meanwhile, [pregnancy complications](#) such as threatened miscarriage, pregnancy-related hypertension, severe anemia and intrauterine growth retardation occurred four times more often in women with celiac disease.

Consider Celiac Disease Screening if You Have Unexplained Infertility

Many researchers and clinicians now recommend that you be screened for celiac disease if you have unexplained infertility - especially if you have any of the classic [celiac disease symptoms](#) or risk factors.

However, many of the women diagnosed in these infertility studies had subtle symptoms of celiac disease or even so-called "clinically silent" celiac disease, in which they had no apparent symptoms. So you shouldn't rely on your symptoms to determine your risk for the condition.

If you're infertile and you have celiac disease, there's hope: many previously infertile women were able to conceive successfully after being diagnosed with celiac disease and adopting the gluten-free diet.

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