

# Gluten Intolerance vs. Gluten Sensitivity

Understanding the Difference in Children with Care

## What is Gluten?

Gluten is a protein found in grains such as wheat, barley, and rye. It gives dough its stretchy texture and is found in many everyday foods, including bread, pasta, cereals, and baked goods.

For some children, eating gluten can lead to uncomfortable symptoms—even if they don't have celiac disease. These reactions are often grouped under **gluten intolerance** or **non-celiac gluten sensitivity**.

## Gluten Intolerance vs. Gluten Sensitivity

Gluten Intolerance and Gluten Sensitivity are terms often used interchangeably, but they typically describe similar symptoms without the autoimmune damage seen in celiac disease.

## Common symptoms include

- Stomach pain or bloating after eating gluten
- Gas or cramping
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Brain fog or trouble concentrating
- Mood changes or irritability

Unlike celiac disease, there is no specific test to diagnose gluten sensitivity. It is usually identified by **ruling out other conditions** and observing how symptoms improve when gluten is removed from the diet.

## How is it Different from Celiac Disease?

- No immune damage to the small intestine
- No positive blood tests or intestinal biopsy results
- Symptoms may be similar, but the condition is not autoimmune
- Removing gluten improves symptoms, but it's not always necessary to follow a strict lifelong gluten-free diet

## How to Manage Gluten Sensitivity

If your child seems sensitive to gluten, a few steps can help manage symptoms and improve their overall wellbeing.

- Try a trial gluten-free diet for a few weeks with guidance from your healthcare provider
- Keep a food and symptom journal to track reactions
- Ensure your child is still receiving a balanced and nutritious diet
- Consult a registered dietitian to avoid nutritional deficiencies
- Avoid unnecessary restrictions without medical advice

## When to Talk to Your Doctor

Speak to your doctor if:

- Your child has ongoing stomach issues or digestive discomfort
- You're unsure whether symptoms are caused by gluten or another food
- You want help managing diet changes in a safe way

## Final Notes from Our Clinic

Gluten intolerance or sensitivity can be frustrating for families—but you're not alone. Our team is here to guide you through understanding your child's symptoms and helping them feel their best.

Always speak with a healthcare provider before making significant dietary changes.