

Celiac 'epidemics' link to infections early in life

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Celiac disease affects about one percent of the population but occasional 'epidemics' have been noticed along with a seasonal variation in number of cases diagnosed. New research published in BioMed Central's open access journal *BMC Pediatrics* indicates that repeated infections early in life increases the risk for celiac disease.

A Sweden-based, case controlled, study compared the health history of children diagnosed with celiac disease to similar children without celiac disease. The average age of development of celiac was at 11 months old, with diagnosis four months later. The team from Umeå University and Uppsala University found that having three or more infections (reported by parents) increased risk of celiac disease by 50%. Gastroenteritis on its own increased the risk by 80%.

The highest risk was seen for children who had several infections before they were six months old and who also ate large amounts (compared to small/medium amounts) of gluten, soon after gluten was introduced, and if breastfeeding had stopped before the introduction of gluten to the babies' diet.

Dr Anna Myléus, who led this study, explained, "While we do not know if the increased risk is due to a [genetic predisposition](#) to both infection and celiac disease, our results highlight the importance of breast feeding in reducing risk of [celiac disease](#), especially for an infant who has frequent infections."

More information: Early infections are associated with increased risk for celiac disease: an incident case-referent study, Anna Myléus, Olle Hernell, Leif Gothefors, Marie-Louise Hammarström, Lars-Åke Persson, Hans Stenlund and Anneli Ivarsson, *BMC Pediatrics* (in press)

Provided by BioMed Central

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