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Wheat allergy making inroads

Risha Chittangia | TNN

New Delhi: An allergy to wheat — or any gluten product — in the Indian population was unthinkable. For long, it has been simply considered as a disease of the West. Doctors say that due to this lack of awareness close to 97% of celiac disease cases remain undiagnosed. If left untreated, the disease can have serious consequences such as autoimmune disorder, rheumatoid arthritis, cancer, neurological complications, etc.

“Wheat is an important part of our diet, specially in north India. That’s why gluten allergy was never considered a serious problem in our country. Though there have been no studies in India to ascertain the prevalence of the disease, it is a serious problem,” said Dr Shijini Bhatnagar, senior scientist, AIIMS.

Celiac diseases occur in people who are genetically predisposed and have gluten intolerance. Gliadin, a gluten protein, triggers the immune system to destroy Villi — a hair-like projection that helps in absorption of important vitamins, minerals, fats, nutrients and micronutrients — in the small intestine. “People who are predisposed to celiac disease are not able to absorb these important nutrients, which play an essential role in the body’s growth and functioning. The Villi is completely destroyed and body functions are disturbed. As a result, a child is not able to gain weight and height. Stunted growth is commonly seen in kids with celiac disease,” said Ishi Khosla, nutritionist and founder president, Celiac Society for Delhi.

Doctors say that chronic diar-

CELIAC DISEASE

It is hard to believe, but gluten allergy is very common in India.

Doctors say due to growing awareness about the disease, some cases are now being diagnosed in the early stages. It is, however, fast becoming a hidden epidemic as the cases that still do remain undiagnosed is

97%



Graphic: Pranjoti Mukherjee

It is an autoimmune disorder that can occur in genetically predisposed people of all ages. **Caused by protein gluten found in wheat, triggers the immune system to develop antibodies that cross-reacts with bowel tissues. As a result, the small intestine is not able to absorb important nutrients, vitamins & micro-nutrients.** In children, it results in stunted growth.

COMMON SYMPTOMS	There are no particular symptoms, but most people who suffer from this disease face problems like
Intermittent diarrhoea	Abdominal cramps, gas and bloating
Weakness & fatigue	Stunted growth (in children)
	Foul-smelling or grayish stools that may be fatty or oily
	Celiac disease shows symptoms of gastric ulcer, anaemia,

CAUSES

Small intestine has tiny hair-like projections called villi, which absorb vitamins, fats, nutrients & other important minerals from food. In celiac disease, villi are destroyed by the body’s own immune system



DIAGNOSTIC TEST

A blood test can detect the higher level of antibodies — anti-endomysium & antitissue transglutaminase — as a result of reaction to gluten



Thyroid Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Liver disease	Rheumatoid arthritis Type 1 diabetes
If left undiagnosed, it can lead to	
Avoid wheat, barley, rye and oats	Consult a dietician for help

OVERALL PRECAUTIONS PRESCRIBED

rhoea, bloating of stomach, unexplained constipation, etc. are symptoms of celiac disease. But in some cases, these symptoms might not be evident. “If left untreated, it can trigger an autoimmune disorder like thyroid, type 1 diabetes, etc. It can even result in cancer or neuro-

logical complications,” said Khosla. But doctors warn that only after detailed investigation should people go on a gluten-free diet. “A blood test can help you diagnose the problem. But an endoscopic biopsy must be done before a kid is put on a glu-

ten-free diet, as it is a lifelong condition. The diet should be planned in consultation with the doctor. Moreover, 6-8% children with diabetes might have celiac disease,” said Dr Anupam Sibal, senior consultant paediatric hepatologist, Indraprastha Apollo.

my city



Dr Anupam Sibal

Group Medical Director,
Apollo Hospitals

Dr Anupam Sibal chose pediatrics for the challenges it offers. One case that Dr Sibal remembers vividly is that of a 18-month-old child who needed a liver transplant. "The father decided to donate a part of his liver to his son. We had to make him realize that a successful liver transplant had never been performed in India," he recalls. After a twelve-hour surgery, the boy was saved. "A ray of hope had emerged for all such children. As I watched the child walk towards me a few months later, the satisfaction was indescribable," says the doc.

Today is World Doctors' Day. Here are some city docs sharing their most cherished moment

New Delhi, Friday, July 01, 2011

X my city

THANK YOU, DOC



Dr Rahul Gera
Radiologist,
Adiva Healthcare

The doctor, who saved his father's life on a holiday, couldn't be on time for the delivery of his only child, as he was on 24 hours duty. An ardent believer in prayers, Dr Gera is of the opinion that "There's a force working up there that makes even the most unthinkable happen." Dr Gera wanted to be an engineer until he came across a doctor when he was 12. "His devotion to his profession and the adulation he got from his little patients changed my mind," he says.



Dr Jyoti Bala Sharma
Neurosurgeon, Fortis Hospital

This young woman aimed to become a neurosurgeon right from her childhood. But she hated her decision when she couldn't do much to save the life of a young girl whose brain cells were dying. "Neurology is a tad tricky. A number of diseases don't fall under a particular bracket and the outcome is fatal. Explaining to family members that we can't save a life is no mean task," she says. Her defining moment came when she gave a 95-year-old man a clot dissolving drug that recovered him completely. "This drug worked wonders for him. His life would have been miserable after a paralytic attack," she says.

