

Get out of the bathroom and get back to your life!



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Q & A With
Dr. Stephen Wangen

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MEET OUR PHYSICIANS

Q & A With Dr. Stephen Wangen

Q. Will you please introduce yourself to the readers? When and why did you to begin to work in the area of gluten free living?

A. I am the co-founder and Medical Director of the IBS Treatment Center. In 1995 I discovered that I was gluten intolerant. I had some of the classic digestive problems, such as diarrhea and bloating, but I also had other symptoms, such as mental fogginess, fatigue, psoriasis, acne, and muscle aches. It wasn't until I stopped eating gluten that I realized that all of these things were being caused by my diet. They all went away, completely and forever. Now I can live my life free of all of these problems, and do whatever I want.

That taught me a valuable lesson about the impact that food has on our health. Since then I've been working with patients, helping them discover how to dramatically improve their health and get their life back, even when many doctors have told them that there is nothing else that can be done for them. It is very gratifying to see people be able to do things that they had previously only dreamed about.

Q. It seems that Celiac Disease and gluten sensitivities have become an epidemic in the US. Are other countries as affected by this?

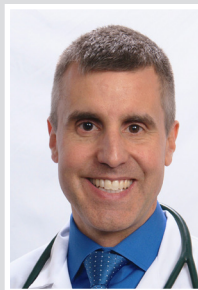
Originally many assumptions were made by very smart people who said that this was a rare condition and that it wasn't found in most other parts of the world. It wasn't until doctors and researchers started to look that they discovered that the prevalence of celiac disease and gluten sensitivities are relatively similar around the world. Regardless of where you are living or what your ethnic background is, you still have about the same chance of reacting to gluten.



Dr. Sanaz Forghani



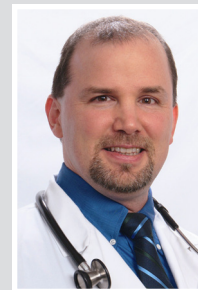
Dr. Kelly Baker



Dr. Stephen Wangen



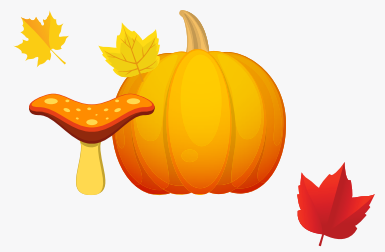
Dr. Dorian Holmes



Dr. Ken Pentland

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Q & A With Dr. Stephen Wangen



Q. In the US, how many people are estimated to have Celiac Disease?

A. It is estimated that around 3 million people in the United States have Celiac Disease. Based on my experience at the IBS Treatment Center, I estimate that around ten times that many have gluten sensitivity, or around 30 million.

Q. Since there are no tests to confirm gluten sensitivities, Is there an estimation on how many people have gluten sensitivities?

A. I am confident that there are tests for measuring gluten sensitivity as well as reactions to other foods. We have been doing that for over 10 years at the IBS Treatment Center. Just because they aren't always recognized by the regular medical community doesn't mean that the tests don't exist or aren't effective. Conventional wisdom used to say that celiac disease was incredibly rare, even when we had wonderful tests for measuring celiac disease. Doctors weren't using the tests and weren't looking for the problem. Just because many doctors don't use tests now for gluten sensitivity doesn't mean that the tests don't work.

Q. Are the symptoms the same, or do they differ?

A. This is a very astute question. Most people assume that the symptoms are significantly different and that you can tell the difference just by talking with someone and asking them about their symptoms. The reality is that even I can't tell the difference, and I've diagnosed hundreds of cases of each.

It's not safe to assume the celiac disease is worse than gluten sensitivity. Many celiacs have no discernible symptoms, and many people with gluten sensitivity end up in the hospital and then released from the hospital without having learned anything new about why they are so sick.

Q. Is Gluten Sensitivity and Non Celiac Gluten Sensitivity the same thing?

A. Gluten sensitivity and non-celiac gluten intolerance, and non-celiac gluten sensitivity all mean the same thing. They describe people who react to gluten, but don't have celiac disease.

Q. What should one do if they suspect they have CD or a GS?

A. If you suspect that you are reacting to gluten, then by all means eliminate it entirely from your diet for a month and see what happens. If you feel better, then trust your instinct. It's nice to find a doctor who can help you, but that isn't always possible. And you don't need the blessing of a doctor in order to remove gluten from your diet. Many doctors will tell you that they want to test you first, or put you back on gluten so that you can be tested. There may be some value to doing that, but you don't have to wait for a doctor to recommend avoiding gluten before starting to eat that way.

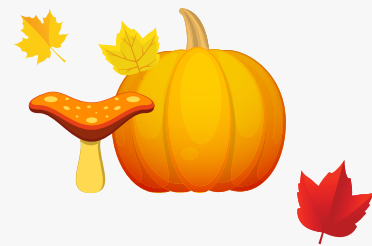
Q. Is it correct that the only treatment for Celiac Disease and gluten sensitivity is the removal of gluten? What about treatment for healing the gut and intestines?

A. If you are reacting to gluten, then the only way to heal your body, including your digestive tract, is to avoid gluten. If you don't avoid gluten, then you'll never really heal.

Q. Are the problems with Celiac Disease and GS strictly confined to the gut and intestines? What are some of the other ways in which someone is affected by CD and GS?

A. The symptoms for both celiac disease and gluten sensitivity are wide ranging and vary from digestive problems to neurological problems, skin problems to joint pain, and just about anything else you can think of.

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Q. What can happen if CD or GS goes untreated?

A. If you have celiac disease or a gluten sensitivity, and you do not stop eating gluten, then you continue to expose yourself to an inflammatory trigger. Because every time you eat gluten, you are causing inflammation. Inflammation is never a good thing. It is the fundamental building block of most health problems, from joint pain to degenerative diseases, and just about everything else. We already know that your risk for developing hundreds of other health problems goes up in celiac disease, and the same is likely true for gluten sensitivity as well.

Q. We are beginning to see more and more GF options in the grocery stores; are people relying more on addressing their problems by cooking for themselves or relying on pre-packaged GF food?

A. I wish that everyone who is avoiding gluten is learning to cook and eating much healthier, but that isn't always the case. The food industry has seen the growing market for gluten free foods, and is producing more and more prepackaged gluten free food. People must be buying it, or it wouldn't be on the shelves.

Q. Often prepackaged foods are higher in sodium, fat content, preservatives, etc. Are you finding the same with Gluten Free pre-packaged foods, or are they generally healthy? Nutritious, help the body heal, etc.

A. Gluten free processed food is still processed food. It's not any better than any other packaged food. Gluten free only refers to what you are avoiding, not what you are eating. And gluten free junk food is still junk food.

Q. Do people who follow a GF diet get enough fiber, and Vitamin B & D? Should they be tested for deficiency, or begin to take GF supplements to support those levels?

A. Whether or not you are getting enough fiber or enough vitamins and minerals depends upon what you are eating. Some people are and some people are not. If you eat a healthy diet, then you are probably getting enough healthy foods to support your nutritional levels. However, if you've been suffering from malabsorption issues for a long time due to a gluten reaction, then you may be very deficient in many vitamins and minerals and need to take supplements for those deficiencies.

Q. I have been seeing more and more information that GS also can include more than just wheat, rye, barley and spelt. I have begun to see studies show that this can also include rice, tapioca, quinoa, corn, etc; what are your thoughts on this?

A. Some people who are gluten intolerant also react to other grains. This is not necessarily because of gluten, because these grains don't contain gluten the way it's referred to in wheat. I do not call this a gluten sensitivity, but a sensitivity to grain.

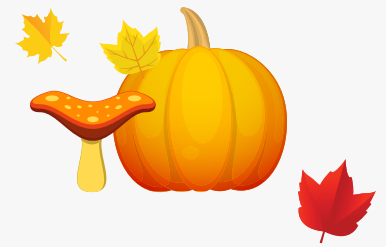
Q. Some people believe that this epidemic is caused by GMO's and others believe it is because of products such as 'Round-up' being sprayed onto our crops. What are your thoughts about this?

A. Our health is a product of evolution, just like everything else about our living world. In order to maintain our health, we need to provide our body the kind of nutritional support with which it has evolved. As we change the foods that we eat by genetically modifying them, or even just hybridizing them in unnatural ways, then we are changing something that has been fundamental to our health for millions of years. The same is true if we expose ourselves to chemicals that our body has never seen before. It doesn't take billions of dollars of research to know that this will have some kind of impact on our health. How much impact is unknown, but these types of things can't be helping.

Q. Is there anything that you would like to add that I have not brought up?

A. Gluten is just the tip of the ice-berg. There are literally hundreds of different variables that affect how well you digest foods. If you are having digestive problems, please contact us at the IBS Treatment Center (www.IBSTreatmentCenter.com). We exist to help people solve these problems so that they can get back to doing the things that they love. Our success rate is unmatched, and there is far more hope for a cure than most people realize.

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