

Celiac Disease–Related Conditions: Who to Test?

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Celiac disease (CeD) is a chronic immune-mediated condition triggered by gluten consumption in genetically predisposed individuals. Approximately 1% of the general population is affected by the disorder. Disease presentation is heterogeneous and, despite growing awareness among physicians and the public, it continues to be underestimated. The most effective strategy for identifying undiagnosed CeD is proactive case finding through serologic testing in high-risk groups. We reviewed the most recent evidence on the association between CeD and more than 20 conditions. In light of this review, CeD screening is recommended in individuals with (1) autoimmune disease and accompanying symptoms suggestive of CeD; (2) diseases that may mimic CeD (eg, irritable bowel syndrome [IBS], inflammatory bowel disease [IBD], and microscopic colitis); and (3) among patients with conditions with a high CeD prevalence: first-degree relatives, idiopathic pancreatitis, unexplained liver enzyme abnormalities, autoimmune hepatitis, primary biliary cholangitis, hyposplenism or functional asplenia with severe bacterial infection, type 1 diabetes mellitus, Hashimoto's thyroiditis and Graves' disease, Sjögren's syndrome, dermatitis herpetiformis, recurrent aphthous syndrome and enamel defects, unexplained ataxia, peripheral neuropathy, delayed menarche or premature menopause, Down syndrome, Turner syndrome, Williams syndrome, chronic fatigue syndrome, IgA nephropathy, and IgA deficiency. CeD serology should be the initial step in the screening process. However, for patients with any of the aforementioned disorders who are undergoing upper endoscopy, biopsies should be performed to rule out CeD.

Celiac disease (CeD) is an immune-mediated disorder¹ that affects approximately 1% of the general population.² In the 1970s and 1980s, it was primarily regarded as a childhood disorder, but since then it has become clear that it occurs often in adults. The disease is characterized by enteropathy with a systemic involvement and formation of antibodies. The diagnosis is made through duodenal biopsies and positive serology.³ The underdiagnosis of CeD can be attributed, in part, to the wide spectrum of symptoms it presents, ranging from classical signs of malabsorption (classical CeD) to asymptomatic cases.³ Many individuals first manifest their CeD through an associated disorder. Multiple mechanisms could potentially account for these associations.

The severity of chronic inflammation and the immune-mediated damage of the small intestinal mucosa in CeD causing villous atrophy can lead to impaired nutrient absorption, causing malnutrition, fatigue, weight loss, and nutritional deficiencies. Villous atrophy impairs, for example, the absorption of calcium and vitamin D, resulting in hypocalcemia and elevated parathyroid hormone levels.⁴ Bone resorption, accelerated by increased parathyroid

Abbreviations used in this paper: AIH, autoimmune hepatitis; AP, acute pancreatitis; CAPH, chronic asymptomatic pancreatic hyperenzymemia; CeD, celiac disease; EoE, eosinophilic esophagitis; GI, gastrointestinal; GFD, gluten-free diet; HR, hazard ratio; IBD, inflammatory bowel disease; IBS, irritable bowel syndrome; IgAD, IgA deficiency; MC, microscopic colitis; OR, odds ratio; PBC, primary biliary cholangitis; SjS, Sjögren's syndrome; T1DM, type 1 diabetes mellitus; WHO, World Health Organization.

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hormone, outpaces new bone formation, leading to net bone loss.⁵ Persistent villous atrophy has been linked to an increased risk of hip fractures.⁶

Genetic predisposition, particularly involving HLA class II genes located on chromosome 6p21 (DR, DQ, and DP loci), plays a crucial role in CeD etiology. Twin studies have reported a high degree of heritability in CeD.⁷ The presence of HLA molecules linked to CeD is a prerequisite for its development. However, these molecules are prevalent in the general population (30%–40%) and are not diagnostic markers for CeD.^{8–10} Recent research using Mendelian randomization has established a relationship between CeD and several autoimmune diseases¹¹: Crohn’s disease, primary biliary cholangitis (PBC), rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus, type 1 diabetes mellitus (T1DM), and asthma. Shared genetic backgrounds, particularly DQ2 and DQ8 positivity, have been documented extensively in T1DM and CeD.^{12,13}

Chronic inflammation in the small intestine, an established risk factor for cancer, is a hallmark of untreated or poorly managed CeD. A Swedish study comprising 7625 patients with CeD with follow-up biopsies revealed a greater risk of lymphoproliferative malignancies in individuals with persistent villous atrophy compared with those with healed mucosa.¹⁴ Nonadherence to a gluten-free diet (GFD) may elevate the risk of cancer and mortality.^{15–19}

Certain diseases may seem more prevalent in CeD because they share symptoms and trigger CeD investigations. With the introduction of CeD serology,^{20,21} physicians have a new tool allowing wider CeD screening. Diagnostics then involve clinical, serologic, genetic, and histologic factors. In clinical practice, distinct clinical scenarios warrant investigation for CeD; **Table 1** summarizes the guidelines for identifying CeD in high-risk individuals and in special situations.^{22–27}

This article undertakes an examination of screening for CeD in more than 30 conditions to provide evidence-based and robust recommendations for screening (**Table 2, Figure 1**).

Irritable Bowel Syndrome

IBS is a disorder of the gut–brain interaction that affects a significant portion of the Western population, ranging from 1.5% to 10.1%.²⁸ The prevalence of CeD in patients with IBS varies across studies and geographical regions, with potential surveillance bias often playing a role (one disease is often diagnosed just before the other, potentially suggesting misclassification). Conversely, many patients diagnosed with CeD encounter IBS symptoms during follow-up, which can sometimes be attributed to gluten cross-contamination, despite strict adherence to a GFD. In addition, some individuals may experience IBS symptoms independent of gluten, as these conditions can overlap.²⁹ Recent international guidelines³⁰ suggest that CeD be ruled out in all functional bowel disorders accompanied by diarrhea. Some guidelines recommend that serologic screening be performed in all patients with IBS symptoms independent of stool pattern.³¹ The recommendation to conduct screening for CeD was partially grounded in a meta-analysis of 36 eligible studies (n = 15,256 individuals, with 9275 fulfilling the criteria for IBS). The odds ratio (OR) for biopsy-confirmed CeD in IBS was 4.48.³² In general, patients presenting with IBS-like symptoms should undergo screening for CeD.^{30,33–35}

Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus

Evidence suggests that the incidence of CeD has increased.³⁶ Recent data (2021) indicate that 8 million people have T1DM.³⁷ T1DM has a strong genetic component (mainly DR3-DQ2 and DR4-DQ8),³⁸ and Thomas et al³⁹ recently reported that autoantibody-positive T1DM is

Table 1. Guidelines for Identifying Populations at Risk for Celiac Disease (High-Risk Individuals) and in Special Situations

Characteristic	Patient group description	Comment on diagnostics
High-risk individuals	Individuals exhibiting symptoms related to CeD or having clinical conditions potentially linked to the disorder (eg, first-degree relatives of patients with CeD or having coexisting autoimmune disorders).	The conventional approach is testing for IgA TTG antibodies plus total IgA concentration, followed by an upper endoscopy in cases of positive serology. However, there is growing evidence supporting a nonbiopsy diagnosis. A serologic approach may be considered in cases of repeatedly high levels of IgA TTG antibodies.
Undergoing endoscopy for any reason	Typical duodenal endoscopic signs of CeD are evident.	Obtain a sufficient number of biopsies. Subsequently, CeD-specific serology may serve as a confirmatory diagnostic test.
Selective IgAD	It is estimated that ≥6% of individuals with this deficiency also have CeD.	IgG serology (IgG TTG/IgG deamidated gliadin peptide antibodies) is needed for diagnosis.
Seronegative CeD	This condition is rare among patients with CeD (1%–5%). In these cases, IgG and IgA serology results are negative, but HLA DQ2/DQ8 is positive.	Duodenal biopsies should be performed.

TTG, tissue transglutaminase.

Table 2. Disorders at High Risk of Celiac Disease

Who to screen? ^a	Yes/no	Source of evidence	Authors' comment
GI disorders			
EoE	No	Guidelines	—
Autoimmune atrophic gastritis	Yes	Guidelines	—
IBS ^b	Yes	Guidelines	—
IBD ^b	Yes	Expert opinion	Screening is not needed during follow-up of IBD if the patient responds well to treatment
MC ^b	Yes	Guidelines	—
Liver/pancreas/spleen disorders			
Unexplained pancreatic enzyme abnormalities	No	Expert opinion	Scarce and contradictory evidence on whether CeD is overrepresented in this group of patients
Idiopathic pancreatitis	Yes	Guidelines	—
Unexplained liver enzyme abnormalities	Yes	Guidelines	—
AIH	Yes	Guidelines	Screening should ideally be carried out before the patient with AIH has received steroids or immunosuppressives
PBC	Yes	Guidelines	—
Hyposplenism or functional asplenia accompanied by severe bacterial infections	Yes	Guidelines	Screening should be performed if the patient has also suffered from severe bacterial infections, in particular, those associated with encapsulated bacteria
Endocrinologic disorders			
T1DM	Yes	Guidelines	Repeat screening in CeD-negative patients with T1DM at 2 and 5 y after T1DM diagnosis
Hashimoto's thyroiditis and Graves' disease	Yes	Guidelines	—
SjS	Yes	Guidelines	—
Osteopenia and osteoporosis	No	Expert opinion	^c
Dermatologic disorders			
Dermatitis herpetiformis	Yes	Guidelines	All patients diagnosed with dermatitis herpetiformis should undergo a duodenal biopsy before initiating GFD
Psoriasis, other dermatologic disorders	No	Expert opinion	^c
Oral disorders			
Recurrent aphthous syndrome	Yes	Guidelines	—
Enamel defects	Yes	Guidelines	—
Neurologic disorders			
Epilepsy	No	Expert opinion	^c
Unexplained ataxia	Yes	Guidelines	—
Peripheral neuropathy	Yes	Guidelines	—
Migraine	No	Expert opinion	^c
Gynecologic disorders			
Infertility	No	Expert opinion	—
RSA	No	Expert opinion	—
Delayed menarche/premature menopause	Yes	Guidelines	—
Genetic conditions			
Down syndrome, Turner syndrome, Williams syndrome	Yes	Guidelines	—

Table 2. Continued

Who to screen? ^a	Yes/no	Source of evidence	Authors' comment
Other disorders			
Chronic fatigue syndrome	Yes	Guidelines	—
IgA nephropathy	Yes	Guidelines	—
IgAD	Yes	Guidelines	—
First-degree relatives, even if asymptomatic	Yes	Guidelines	—
Mass screening in the general population	No	Guidelines	—

^aScreening includes serologic testing at diagnosis and obtaining appropriate small intestinal biopsies if a patient recommended for screening undergoes upper endoscopy for any reason.

^bReasons to screen for CeD not only based on associations with CeD, but also because GI symptoms in these diseases mean they may represent misclassified CeD.

^cConsider screening only if the patient has GI symptoms or other information suggesting an increased risk of CeD.

strongly linked to DR3-DQ2. A nationwide Finnish study found 1 in 5 individuals with T1DM had at least 1 other autoimmune disease.⁴⁰ Compared with diabetes-free controls, Finnish people with T1DM were at a 4.6-fold increased risk of CeD.⁴⁰ Also, several meta-analyses have concluded that CeD is more prevalent in T1DM, with pooled prevalence rates ranging from 5.1%^{41,42} to 6.0%.⁴³ Detecting CeD in T1DM is important because of the potential impact of celiac comorbidity on the long-term prognosis of T1DM.^{44–46} Supported by a screening study of more than 1000 asymptomatic patients with T1DM,⁴⁷ treatment with a GFD adds to the burden of T1DM but seems to have no major negative effects on hemoglobin A1c levels, hypoglycemia episodes, and growth in young people.⁴⁸ However, Mahmud et al⁴⁷ failed to find a lower hemoglobin A1C in asymptomatic T1DM+ patients with CeD randomized to a GFD compared with those who continued on a normal diet. Individuals with T1DM should be screened for CeD.^{23,49} Because CeD can manifest at any time and with greater frequency during the initial 5 years, conducting additional screenings in CeD-negative T1DM patients 2 and 5 years after T1DM diagnosis and those who later develop gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms may be advisable.

Autoimmune Hepatitis and Unexplained Liver Enzyme Abnormalities

Autoimmune hepatitis (AIH) is a progressive autoimmune liver disorder in which inflammation can ultimately develop into cirrhosis with liver failure.^{50,51} AIH has been linked to several autoimmune conditions.⁵² The CeD prevalence has ranged from just above that of the general population (approximately 1%) to 1 in 5 individuals in AIH (2%–20%).^{53–55} In a recent meta-analysis, 15 relevant studies were identified, with 8 included in the main analysis. The pooled prevalence of biopsy-verified CeD in AIH was 3.5% (95% CI, 1.6–5.3%).⁵⁶

CeD may also present through elevated liver enzymes (aminotransferases), a condition that is often asymptomatic. Two mechanisms have been proposed to explain why liver enzymes can increase in individuals with CeD. One is through

cryptogenic liver disease, usually normalizing with treatment using a GFD. The other pathway involves autoimmunity (AIH, reviewed above), when both CeD and liver disease must be treated for the liver enzymes to normalize. One meta-analysis suggested that 5%–6% of patients with elevated transaminases but no other known cause have biopsy-confirmed CeD.⁵⁷ Consistent with the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases,⁵⁰ individuals with AIH should be screened for CeD. Ideally, this testing should be performed before the patient with AIH has received steroids or immunosuppressives, as such treatment may affect the villus structure and impede CeD diagnosis. Also, patients with unexplained elevated liver enzymes should be screened.^{22,23}

Inflammatory Bowel Disease

Both CeD and IBD are immune-mediated diseases. Immunologically, patients with CeD and ulcerative colitis, but not Crohn's disease, are prone to develop autoantibodies.^{20,58} CeD and ulcerative colitis may also share genetic⁵⁹ risk factors.

Multiple studies have investigated the association between CeD and IBD. A meta-analysis of more than 60 studies published in 2020⁶⁰ found a risk ratio of 4.0 for CeD in patients with IBD. More recently, Mårild et al⁶¹ conducted a large study to examine 48,551 individuals with CeD who were at a 3.9-fold increased risk of later IBD (both ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease showed an increase). Mårild et al also reported that 2.4% of all patients with IBD in Sweden also had CeD,⁶¹ thus providing further evidence for this association.

In their study, Kori et al⁶² determined that the OR for CeD was roughly 3 in patients with IBD compared with controls. In contrast, Sonnenberg and Genta⁶³ recently presented data from the Inform Diagnostics database showing an inverse relationship between IBD and CeD (OR, 0.50; 95% CI, 0.38–0.64). However, this study was limited to people who underwent bidirectional endoscopy on the same day, which may have influenced the findings. Two potential causes could account for an elevated risk of CeD in IBD. An important point to note is that some individuals with IBD are being screened for CeD exclusively after their diagnosis

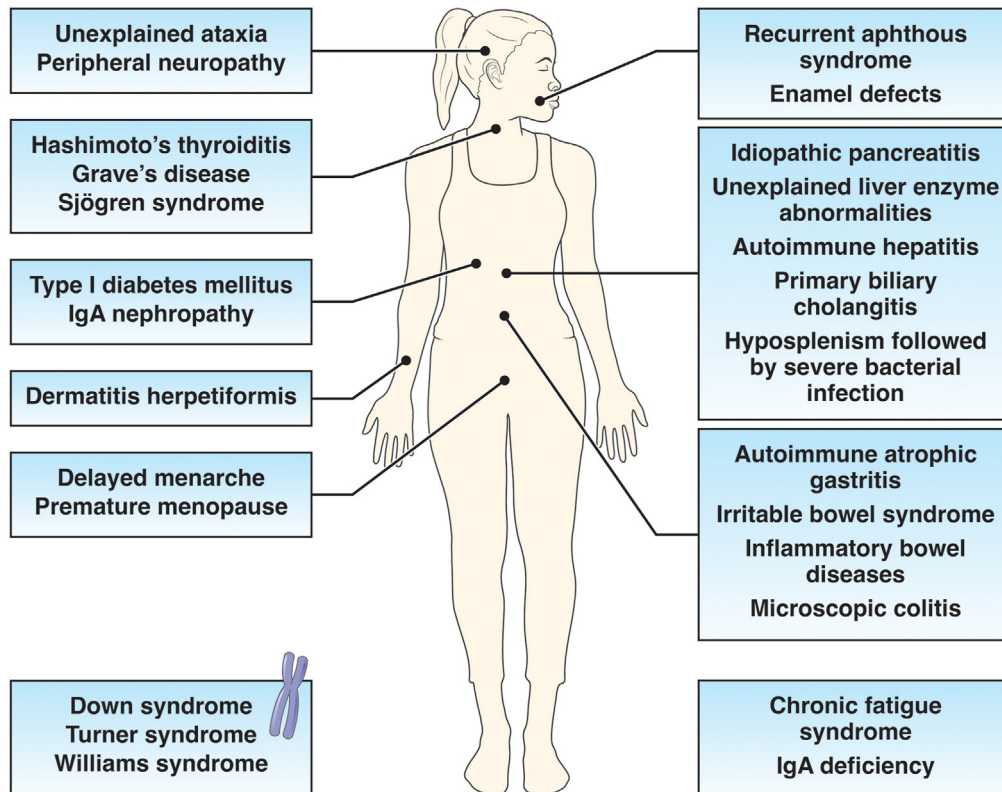


Figure 1. Disorders associated with CeD.

of IBD. An alternative explanation is that CeD may develop later in life, possibly triggered by the inherent inflammation of IBD or a shared trigger. Given the extensive evidence, it seems justifiable that patients with IBD are screened for CeD, especially those who do not respond well to treatment.

Eosinophilic Esophagitis

Eosinophilic esophagitis (EoE) is a clinicopathological disorder characterized by esophageal dysfunction and eosinophilic inflammation,⁶⁴ typically with ≥ 15 eosinophils/high-power microscopy field.⁶⁵ In recent years, there has been a rise in reported cases of EoE.⁶⁶ Although the immunologic background of EoE may differ from CeD (Th2 vs Th1), their symptoms may be comparable. In the case of EoE, these may involve dysphagia, feeding difficulties, vomiting, and abdominal discomfort. The usual diagnostic procedure for CeD and EoE requires an upper endoscopy. Such a procedure will increase the likelihood that a patient is diagnosed with CeD, even if symptoms are related to EoE. Diagnostic workup for CeD and EoE will automatically strengthen any disease association. Although several studies have suggested an increased risk of CeD in patients with EoE,⁶⁷ few have used control groups. Moreover, the conclusions have frequently relied on a case series comprising fewer than 10 patients with CeD and EoE. Of the only 2 meta-analyses conducted on this issue, the first⁶⁸ underlined the limitations of earlier research, and the other,⁶⁹ which included a cohort of more than 10,000

children undergoing endoscopy, found no association between CeD and EoE. Hence, patients with EoE should not undergo screening for CeD.⁷⁰

Microscopic Colitis

Microscopic colitis (MC) is a disease of middle old age, with a female predominance.⁷¹ Common symptoms include watery diarrhea,⁷¹ which overlaps with the presentation of CeD in some individuals. Collagenous colitis and CeD share a genetic predisposition.⁷² MC has been linked to DQB1_201, which is also seen in CeD.⁷³ Consequently, it is not possible to assert that the shared genes are exclusive to collagenous colitis or relevant to lymphocytic colitis because of the limited research in the field.

Danish data reported a 10-fold increase in CeD in patients with MC.⁷⁴ Still, assuming that most patients with MC underwent CeD testing, the reported prevalence of CeD in this Danish cohort was not higher than expected for the general population (1%).² In addition, Bergman et al⁷⁵ followed up more than 45,000 individuals with CeD and 224,000 reference individuals to examine the future risk of MC. They found that a higher proportion of patients with MC had a CeD diagnosis compared with the Danish patient population⁷⁴ (possibly reflecting differences in CeD patterns between countries). Extrapolating from another MC study⁷⁶ obtained from the ESPRESSO (Epidemiology Strengthened by Histopathology Reports in Sweden) cohort,⁷⁷ we can assume that roughly 3% of Swedish patients with MC were diagnosed with CeD at some point. Despite that data on the actual

prevalence of CeD in patients with MC are limited, guidelines recommend to screen for CeD at the workup for MC.⁷⁸

Hyposplenism or Functional Asplenia

Hyposplenism has been linked to CeD. The prevalence of this condition increased from 19% in patients with uncomplicated CeD to 59% in those with CeD and other autoimmune diseases and up to 80% in those patients with CeD who had premalignant or malignant complications.⁷⁹ A GFD is effective in restoring splenic function, except in patients with an irreversible loss of splenic tissue.^{80,81} Hyposplenism and functional asplenia are potential factors contributing to the heightened risk of severe bacterial infections in CeD in children^{82,83} and adults,^{84–87} particularly those associated with encapsulated bacteria; risks that persist even years after CeD diagnosis. However, the absence of definitive evidence necessitates restricting screening to patients with confirmed hyposplenism and severe bacterial infections.

Unexplained Amylase/Pancreatic Enzyme Abnormalities

Pancreatic dysfunction, including exocrine pancreatic insufficiency (seen in 26.2% of patients with newly diagnosed CeD⁸⁸), chronic asymptomatic pancreatic hyperenzymemia (CAPH), and acute pancreatitis (AP)⁸⁹ have been associated with CeD. No association between autoimmune pancreatitis and CeD has been described, however.⁹⁰ Reports on CeD have yielded contradictory results for CAPH. Carroccio et al⁹¹ found a CAPH prevalence of approximately 25% in childhood and adult CeD. In contrast, the investigation for CeD in 65 patients with CAPH yielded predominantly negative results.⁹²

A prospective study of 169 patients with recurrent abdominal pain suggestive of pancreatic disease found that 12 (7.1%) had histologic evidence consistent with CeD.⁹³ Two studies from high-quality Swedish national registers showed an almost 3-fold increase in the risk of developing pancreatitis in patients with CeD.^{94,95} Concerning the etiology of pancreatitis in CeD, Sadr-Azodi et al⁹⁵ showcased an increased risk of non-gallstone AP in patients with CeD after adjusting for alcohol-related disorders. Similarly, Ludvigsson et al⁹⁴ showed an increased risk of AP after accounting for high alcohol consumption and gallstone disease. An extensive US population database recently found a higher risk of a new diagnosis of acute and chronic pancreatitis in patients with CeD within 1 month of diagnosis. Idiopathic AP was the most common etiology in patients with CeD.⁹⁶ Patients with unexplained pancreatitis should be screened for CeD.^{22,23}

Autoimmune Atrophic Gastritis

The prevalence of CeD in autoimmune atrophic gastritis is variable, ranging from 2.1% to 9.1%.^{97–100} Although these estimates include newly diagnosed (on screening) cases and already established CeD, the latter should not be an

argument for screening. Still, current evidence supports CeD screening in patients with autoimmune atrophic gastritis.¹⁰¹

Psoriasis and Other Skin Disorders

Psoriasis is a chronic inflammatory disease affecting approximately 2% of the population and is characterized by well-demarcated, erythematous, scaly plaques.¹⁰²

Recently, a meta-analysis, including 9 studies with 136,536 cases and 5,716,558 controls, found a double risk of earlier CeD in psoriasis (OR, 2.16; 95% CI, 1.74–2.69). However, no association was seen between psoriasis and later CeD.¹⁰³ The study also showed that patients with CeD were 1.8-fold more likely to have psoriasis, and the patients with CeD had a 1.7 times higher risk of developing new-onset psoriasis.¹⁰³

A recent population-based cohort study of patients with histologically confirmed CeD evaluated the risk of skin disorders in patients with CeD (n = 43,300) compared with comparators (n = 198,532).¹⁰⁴ In addition to a strong association with dermatitis herpetiformis (hazard ratio [HR], 70.42; 95% CI, 46.62–106.39), the study found a positive association between CeD and all examined skin disorders (ie, eczema, psoriasis, urticaria, vitiligo, acne, and alopecia areata), but with moderate risk estimates (ranging from acne [HR, 1.39] to vitiligo [HR, 1.90]). It should also be noted that part of the association may be coincidental.¹⁰⁵

Two recent studies have confirmed an association between CeD and atopic dermatitis, although with rather different risk estimates (OR, 1.61¹⁰⁶ and a 4-fold increased risk of later CeD in children with atopic dermatitis¹⁰⁷). Two other studies have also reported a link with chronic urticaria.^{108,109} A meta-analysis by Nieri et al¹¹⁰ found a higher risk of recurrent aphthous syndrome in patients with CeD (OR, 3.79; 95% CI, 2.67–5.3), confirmed in children and adults. Enamel defects were also observed (OR, 5.69; 95% CI, 3.47–9.33), but only in children.

Although noticeable associations exist between CeD and various skin disorders, these associations tend to be of moderate strength. Based on the current evidence, screening for CeD should be performed in all patients with recurrent aphthous syndrome and enamel defects.^{22,23} It is also recommended to perform screenings for other skin disorders (eg, eczema, psoriasis, urticaria, vitiligo, acne, and alopecia areata) exclusively in cases when there is an indication of an increased risk of CeD based on GI symptoms or additional information.

Dermatitis Herpetiformis

Dermatitis herpetiformis is commonly regarded as the cutaneous manifestation of CeD, which is triggered by gluten and improved by a GFD.¹¹¹ Therefore, CeD serology is widely recommended.^{22,23,112} This rare skin presentation represents the most frequent skin disorder in CeD, as reported by Lebwohl et al.¹⁰⁴ Dermatitis herpetiformis is characterized by intensely pruritic papules and vesicles, primarily on extensor surfaces, such as elbows, knees, buttocks, or the lower back.¹¹³

Osteopenia, Osteoporosis, and Risk of Bone Fractures

Both osteopenia and osteoporosis have been linked to CeD,¹¹⁴ and patients with CeD seem to be at increased risk of fractures.¹¹⁵ However, there is still a lack of consensus regarding the potential risk of CeD in patients with osteopenia or osteoporosis.

Stenson et al¹¹⁶ reported a higher occurrence of CeD (3.4%) in postmenopausal women compared with women without osteoporosis (0.2%), leading the authors to recommend serologic screening for CeD in all patients with osteoporosis. However, in a comprehensive meta-analysis of more than 3000 patients, the prevalence of CeD (1.6%) was only marginally higher compared with the general population.¹¹⁷ Recent data from the Netherlands has emphasized the lack of a definitive link between CeD and fractures. In patients with fractures, only 0.38% were found to have biopsy-proven CeD, which aligns with the anticipated prevalence of CeD in Western Europe.¹¹⁸ This latter study did not recommend screening for CeD in middle-aged patients with fractures.¹¹⁸ Based on the current evidence, screening for CeD should only be performed in patients with osteoporosis or osteopenia if they exhibit additional signs of CeD.

Chronic Fatigue

Chronic fatigue syndrome is characterized by an overwhelming sense of tiredness, lack of energy, and persistent and prolonged exhaustion, even after rest.¹¹⁹ This syndrome is associated with systemic immune activation and has been reported frequently in CeD.¹²⁰ Previous evidence indicated a prevalence of 2%–3% of CeD in individuals who present with chronic fatigue.¹²¹ Clinical research in this field encounters challenges because of the scarcity of published studies, small sample sizes, diverse study designs, and the use of unspecified instruments for chronic fatigue measurement. In addition, clinical factors, such as depression and anemia, can act as confounders. A recent literature review suggested that the prevalence of chronic fatigue varies significantly at CeD diagnosis and that treatment with a GFD may have a positive impact. However, there are few data to confirm that GFD improves symptoms in patients with CeD.¹²² The current guidelines^{22,23} suggest CeD screening in patients with chronic fatigue. Nonetheless, additional research is needed.

Chromosomal Syndromes

A high prevalence of CeD has been reported in several chromosomal disorders, warranting the need for CeD screening in at least the following groups: Down syndrome, Turner syndrome, and Williams (Beuren) syndrome.^{22,23,101}

Down Syndrome

A meta-analysis of 31 studies encompassing 4383 individuals found a prevalence rate of biopsy-confirmed CeD of 5.8% (95% CI, 4.7%–7.2%) in patients with Down syndrome, particularly in children.¹²³ In 2020, Liu et al¹²⁴

conducted a retrospective study on 1317 children with Down syndrome, finding a 9.8% prevalence of CeD.

Turner Syndrome

A recent systematic review and meta-analysis of 36 eligible studies, including 6291 patients with Turner syndrome, found a crude prevalence of 3.8% in CeD.¹²⁵ The risk of CeD in females with Turner syndrome ranged from a 2-fold increase in the first 5 years of life to a more than 5-fold increase in females older than 10 years at CeD diagnosis.¹²⁶

Williams (Beuren) Syndrome

Studies have reported CeD prevalences of 4.1%,¹²⁷ 6.9%,¹²⁸ and 10.8%.¹²⁹

Neurologic Manifestations

CeD is linked to a variety of neurologic disorders. These conditions may present before the diagnosis of CeD, throughout its progression, and potentially lead to noncompliance with treatment, even in the absence of typical GI symptoms.¹³⁰

Cicarelli et al¹³¹ found that 27.9% of patients with CeD following a GFD exhibited a minimum of 2 of 3 peripheral neurologic symptoms, such as cramps, paresthesia, weakness, reduction of vibratory sense, and hyporeflexia. In a study by Hadjivassiliou et al,¹³² it was noted that 67% of patients diagnosed with CeD showed signs of neurologic dysfunction, 24% experienced gait instability, 12% had persistent sensory symptoms, and 42% reported frequent headaches; 21% had at least 2 of these neurologic symptoms.¹³²

Gluten ataxia, characterized by a lack of coordination, is associated with antigliadin antibodies. It typically manifests as either pure cerebellar ataxia or, in rare cases, ataxia in combination with myoclonus, palatal tremor, opsoclonus, or chorea.¹³³ Its onset is commonly insidious, often occurring during adulthood. Of note, few patients with gluten ataxia experience GI symptoms, and roughly one-third will show signs of enteropathy on biopsy.¹³³ An older study with a small sample size found that 12% of patients with cerebellar ataxia without a confirmed diagnosis had CeD based on serologic and histologic evaluations. However, none of the patients with genetic or Friedreich's ataxia met the criteria for a diagnosis of CeD.¹³⁴ Cerebellar atrophy may be observed in up to 60% of patients with gluten ataxia.¹³³

The prevalence of epilepsy in CeD has been estimated to range from 1.2% to 5%. Compared with the general population, Italian and Swedish data indicated a 1.4- to 2-fold higher risk of later epilepsy in patients with CeD.^{135,136}

Finally, a population-based study found that CeD was associated with a 2-fold increased risk of a later diagnosis of headache.¹³⁷ Risk increases were seen for migraine (HR, 1.67) and unclassified headache (HR, 1.67), but not trigeminal neuralgia (HR, 1.35). Routine screening for CeD is recommended in patients with peripheral neuropathy and ataxia.^{22,23} Although the connection between CeD and other neurologic disorders is

evident, these associations tend to be of moderate strength, therefore, epilepsy and headache should only prompt screening in patients with concomitant GI symptoms.

Hashimoto's Thyroiditis and Graves' Disease

The prevalence of autoimmune thyroid diseases, namely Hashimoto's thyroiditis and Graves' disease, are approximately 2%–3% and 1%, respectively, in the general population, with a higher incidence in females.¹³⁸ For other studies,¹³⁹ a Swedish epidemiologic study of 14,021 patients with CeD found a significant association between CeD and hypothyroidism (HR, 4.4; 95% CI, 3.4–5.6), thyroiditis (HR, 3.6; 95% CI, 1.9–6.7), and hyperthyroidism (HR, 2.9; 95% CI, 2.0–4.2).¹⁴⁰ These findings have been confirmed elsewhere (OR, 3.08).¹⁴¹ A meta-analysis of 27 studies showed a prevalence of biopsy-proven CeD in 6.2% of children and 2.7% of adults with autoimmune thyroid disease.¹⁴² The suggestion to screen for CeD in patients with autoimmune thyroid disease is widely supported.^{22,23}

Primary Biliary Cholangitis

PBC is a chronic cholestatic and autoimmune disease affecting women predominantly.¹⁴³ These patients have a high prevalence of CeD.¹⁴⁴ A 12-year study in South Wales reported CeD in 4 of 67 (6%) patients with PBC.¹⁴⁵ A Danish study reported a standardized incidence ratio of 27.6 (95% CI, 2.9–133) for PBC in Denmark and 25.1 in Sweden compared with the general population.¹⁴⁶ A more recent large-scale study has confirmed a strong association between CeD and later PBC (HR, 10.16).¹⁴⁷ In contrast, a smaller study from Crete found no increased risk of PBC.¹⁴⁸ A UK longitudinal primary care study on 4732 patients with CeD and 23,620 sex- and age-matched controls reported a 3-fold higher risk of PBC compared with the general population.¹⁴⁹ A literature review found that the prevalence of PBC in CeD ranged between 0% and 11%.¹⁵⁰ In conclusion, the evidence suggests the need to screen patients with PBC for CeD.¹⁰¹

Sjögren's Syndrome

Sjögren's syndrome (SjS) is an autoimmune disease characterized by the destruction of exocrine glands, leading to ocular and oral sicca. The diagnosis is based on antibodies and biopsies of salivary gland tissue.¹⁵¹ Celiac seroprevalence (anti-transglutaminase IgA) appears to be more frequent in SjS than in other rheumatic diseases (eg, systemic lupus erythematosus, rheumatoid arthritis, and systemic sclerosis).¹⁵² A large multicenter study in Italy found that patients with SjS (n = 354) had a higher prevalence of CeD than controls (n = 14,298) (6.78% vs 0.64%; $P < .0001$).¹⁵³ In a study of 111 Hungarian patients with SjS, a CeD prevalence rate of 4.5% was found.¹⁵⁴ In another study involving 34 Finnish patients diagnosed with SjS, 5 cases of histology-proven CeD were observed (14.7%).¹⁵⁵ Current evidence supports CeD screening in all patients with SjS.¹⁰¹

IgA Nephropathy

IgA nephropathy is one of the most common kidney diseases worldwide.¹⁵⁶ This disease is chronic and lifelong and induced by IgA deposits in the renal glomeruli, leading to complement activation and injury.¹⁵⁷ Research on CeD and IgA nephropathy has found a 3-fold higher risk of IgA nephropathy in patients with CeD.^{158,159} Another study that comprised 223 patients with IgA nephropathy showed a CeD prevalence of 3.6%.¹⁶⁰ Patients with unexplained IgA nephropathy should undergo screening for CeD.²²

IgA Deficiency

Selective IgA deficiency (IgAD), an isolated IgAD with normal IgM and IgG levels, is the most common primary immune defect.¹⁶¹ More than 1 in 4 patients with IgAD have a concomitant autoimmune disease.¹⁶¹ The prevalence of IgAD in patients with CeD is approximately 2%.^{162–164} A study of 65 children with IgAD revealed a prevalence rate for CeD of 7.7%.¹⁶⁵ A Swedish study detected 54 biopsy-proven cases of CeD in sera from 356 patients with IgAD (15.2%).¹⁶⁶ Testing only IgA anti-tissue transglutaminase may result in false-negative CeD serology in individuals with IgAD.¹⁶⁶ Hence, it is important to confirm the CeD diagnosis in these patients through IgG serology (tissue transglutaminase IgG or deamidated gliadin peptide IgG) and, if positive, duodenal biopsy.^{22,23} Screening for CeD is advisable for patients with IgAD.

Infertility and Recurrent Spontaneous Abortion

As per the World Health Organization (WHO), *infertility* is defined as failure to conceive after engaging in regular unprotected sexual intercourse for a period of 12 months. Recurrent spontaneous abortion (RSA), occurring in 1%–2% of all women, is determined by the presence of 2 or more consecutive abortions of unknown origin.¹⁶⁷ Data on infertility and RSA in CeD are conflicting.^{168,169} Three population-based cohort studies found comparable fertility rates in women with CeD adhering to a GFD and those without CeD.^{170–172} However, the data from these studies may suggest a potential decrease in fertility for women between the ages of 25 and 29 years who are diagnosed with CeD. This decrease is observed both before and after the diagnosis, which could be due to individuals choosing to delay their pregnancies (either voluntarily or involuntarily) out of concern for symptoms or because they are undergoing medical investigations, including endoscopy, or postponing pregnancy because of nutritional concerns (from a recently diagnosed CeD). Data from meta-analysis do not suggest an increased CeD seroprevalence in women with unexplained infertility.¹⁷³ Also, a subsequent meta-analysis conducted in 2021 applied more stringent inclusion criteria (11 studies, 1617 women) and found no association between infertility and CeD.¹⁷⁴ Evidence showed that CeD can manifest clinically for the first time during pregnancy or in the puerperium.¹⁷⁵ In conclusion, based on current evidence, women who experience repeated adverse pregnancy

outcomes should be screened for CeD; however, screening for CeD should not rely exclusively on infertility.

Delayed Menarche and Premature Menopause

Data on age at menarche and menopause in CeD are limited and conflicting. In line with 2 other studies,^{176,177} a 2-center cross-sectional study with 228 children with CeD demonstrated an older mean age at menarche compared with healthy individuals (13.13 vs 12.15 years).¹⁷⁸ Some other studies found no difference in mean age at menarche.^{179,180} In a few studies, later menarche and earlier menopause have been observed in untreated CeD compared with GFD-treated CeD.^{175,181} Based on recent guidelines, CeD is recommended for young women with amenorrhea or delayed menarche.^{22,23}

First-Degree Relatives

The heritability of CeD is high, as reported by Fasano et al¹⁸² in 2003, who found an increased prevalence of CeD in first- and second-degree relatives. In 2015, Singh et al¹⁸³ evaluated 54 studies and documented a pooled prevalence of CeD of 7.5% in first-degree relatives. The current guidelines suggest screening for CeD in first-degree relatives of patients with CeD.^{22,23} Regarding the risk of CeD in second-degree relatives, Singh et al reported a prevalence of 2.3% in CeD. However, further research is necessary before recommending screening for second-degree relatives.

Discussion

This article aims to provide an overview of the screening process for CeD in high-risk groups. Screening is recommended in diseases mimicking CeD (eg, IBD and MC), as well as in high-risk groups, such as first-degree relatives and patients with autoimmune diseases. In addition, patients displaying symptoms and signs suggestive of CeD should undergo CeD investigation, although this falls outside the realm of traditional screening. We believe that more cost-effectiveness research on cutoffs for CeD screening is needed. Applying a cutoff level for undiagnosed CeD implies that screening recommendations could change. With an increase in the incidence and prevalence of CeD in many countries,¹⁸⁴ efforts should be made to increase case finding for CeD. The WHO mandates the fulfillment of several criteria for mandatory general screening. Although we do not advocate for CeD screening of the general population, WHO criteria can help readers determine which high-risk groups should undergo screening. CeD is well-defined (criterion I). We emphasize the importance of confirming asymptomatic CeD through a small intestinal biopsy. This is because the costs of a false-positive CeD diagnosis are high in a patient who may not have sought the diagnosis (testing of patients with GI symptoms constitutes case finding and not screening). Moreover, the establishment of a diagnosis of CeD would require lifetime dedication to a GFD. There is growing research on the quality of life and the benefits of a GFD in patients with screen-detected CeD.^{185–189}

Screening tests for CeD are also simple, safe, and accurate (criterion II). However, one must consider that as the expected prevalence of CeD decreases in a screened patient group, the positive predictive value (the probability that positive serology indicates true CeD) also decreases. This is because of the significant risk of false-positive cases, even with a specificity of 99% in screening populations with a CeD prevalence of 1%–2%. Screening for CeD seems culturally acceptable worldwide (criterion III). Treatment is readily available (ie, the GFD) (criterion IV). However, treatment does not prohibit all consequences of CeD. Although adhering to a strict GFD is expected to reduce symptoms, dietary treatment has fewer benefits in an asymptomatic individual. A GFD can also induce mucosal healing, either partially or completely.

Finally, the WHO suggests that screening should only be performed in diseases for which clinical detection is difficult (criterion V). Although that condition is met, it is unclear whether detecting undiagnosed CeD will prevent complications (criterion VI) or whether testing and treatment is cost-effective (criterion VII) in patients with asymptomatic CeD.

Many questions remain regarding CeD screening (some are discussed in more detail in our earlier study¹⁹⁰). It has been suggested that a strict GFD may prevent the development of other autoimmune disorders. This could be used as a rationale for implementing early screening.¹⁹¹

As mentioned, the comorbidities discussed in this review may be linked to various mechanisms. Mucosal damage can lead to malnutrition, resulting in nutritional deficiencies that underlie conditions, such as osteopenia and fatigue. A shared genetic background has been well established for T1DM, with similar assumptions for other conditions, including Crohn's disease, rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus, and asthma. Inflammation can serve as a trigger for additional comorbidities, such as IBD. Finally, shared symptoms can serve as a catalyst for investigations into CeD, as evidenced in cases of IBS.

This review focused on screening of high-risk groups with comorbidities. Not all of these patients require screening unless they are symptomatic. However, there is 1 group of individuals for whom we believe the evidence for screening is strong: first-degree relatives.¹⁸³ In the largest meta-analysis, the pooled prevalence of CeD was 7.5% in first-degree relatives, with siblings showing the highest rates. Testing family members for gluten sensitivity presents unique challenges because of potential lower gluten consumption, increasing the risk of false-negative screening results.

The recommendation for repeated screening for CeD applies only to patients with T1DM, justified by 2 factors. First, T1DM often occurs at a young age, so individuals are still at a high risk of developing CeD later in life. Second, the prevalence of undiagnosed CeD may be higher in T1DM than in most other diseases analyzed in our review.⁴³

Most current guidelines recommend conducting CeD screening for numerous conditions. We concur that indications for screening should be broad, with emphasis on identifying aggressive cases and symptomatic patients with CeD. In these specific patients, a diagnosis can provide relief

from celiac symptoms, although the impact of diagnosing CeD on life expectancy and quality of life remains uncertain. There is still a need for data on the cost-effectiveness of CeD. Several articles have recently investigated the economic burden of CeD, both pre and post diagnosis,^{192–194} particularly in terms of health care costs, productivity loss among patients in the workforce and school, drug costs, as well as the prognosis of undiagnosed and asymptomatic CeD. As yet, there is no evidence supporting mass screening.¹⁹⁰

Our review has some limitations. Space and the scope to discuss individual disorders and CeD screening were limited. Many of the studies included in this review were performed in Europe or North America. However, further research from other regions is necessary, as screening recommendations may vary based on the prevalence of CeD in the general population. Although health economy research on CeD is growing,^{192–194} there is a lack of specific data on the cost–benefit analysis of screening. There is also a need for more data on screen-detected CeD and quality of life.

In conclusion, screening for CeD should be considered for a broad spectrum of disorders. Screening tests are safe and valid; however, they should be performed according to strict principles prioritizing the transparency of benefits to patients and society.

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Conflicts of interest

These authors disclose the following: Jonas F. Ludvigsson has an ongoing research collaboration on celiac disease with Takeda. Fabiana Zingone served as a speaker for Werfen and as a consultant for Takeda. Christophe Cellier was engaged as a speaker for Dr Shar and a consultant for Takeda. The remaining author discloses no conflicts.