



GLUTEN SENSITIVITY TESTING

DR. THOMAS O'BRYAN, DC, CCN, DACBN

Question: Do I have to reintroduce gluten in order to have an accurate gluten sensitivity test done?

Answer: Yes and No

The first question to ask is, why are you doing the gluten sensitivity test? There are three different scenarios.

- 1. You want to know if you can have gluten again.** If you know you are sensitive to gluten and have been on a gluten-free diet, and want to know if you can have gluten again, then a challenge is in order (reintroduce gluten). **THIS IS STRONGLY NOT RECOMMENDED.** The gluten challenge has many documented cases of people who were damaged (some permanently) from the reaction to reintroducing gluten.¹ More importantly, a gluten challenge is no longer necessary to diagnose celiac disease.² There are significant dangers to reintroducing gluten. In one study, among 374 children who were diagnosed with celiac disease before the age of two, 5% developed an autoimmune disorder while on a gluten-free diet. Some children who were on a gluten-free diet (symptom-free for years) and resumed eating gluten developed systemic autoimmune disease with the following prevalence.
 - 4% in less than 12 months
 - 9% in 13 to 36 months
 - 26% in more than 36 months

The take home message: 1 out of 4 people who are gluten-free, eliminate all of their symptoms, and resume eating gluten again will develop autoimmune disease within 3 years.³

- 2. You are gluten sensitive, are on a gluten-free diet, and want to know, "Am I better?"** You can test while you are gluten-free to confirm that you are successful at "quieting down" the inflammatory cascade that occurs with gluten sensitivity. This cascade is implicated in the development of autoimmune disease. Unfortunately, clinically we see that about 6 out of every 10 people who are gluten-free and do a test find that the results come back positive with elevated antibodies to the peptides of gluten. The possible reasons for this are outlined below. Testing while being gluten-free serves as an indication of how well your efforts are or are not working. If you test positive, your healthcare practitioner can further refine your regimen to tame your immune system.
- 3. You want to know, "Have I outgrown my gluten sensitivity? Is it okay for me to eat just a little gluten now?"** I hate to break it to you, but there is no such thing as outgrowing gluten sensitivity. It is a genetic predisposition that, if it is there, it will always be there. Still, there are some people who go gluten-free, feel better, and try a little exposure and feel "fine." They think they can have a little gluten. Please understand, just like you can't be a little pregnant, you can't have a little gluten! Your body may adapt and your spectrum of symptoms may change, but be sure that symptoms will return down the

road -- perhaps in the form of another autoimmune disease. If you eat gluten again, you'll be "throwing the dice" hoping that you will not be the 1 out of 4 people who develops another autoimmune disease within 3 years. Cyrex Labs Array #3 can tell you whether or not you can have a little gluten AND avoid the risk of developing autoimmune conditions.

For those of you who insist on doing a gluten challenge and pushing the envelope (**AGAIN STRONGLY NOT RECOMMENDED**), first test while you are on a gluten-free diet and ensure that your test comes back negative. Then, do your gluten challenge and test again 1 to 2 months later.

It is important to note that many people do not develop celiac disease until later in life. So even if your test is negative now, but you are genetically vulnerable to celiac disease, you can develop it in the future when your body is no longer able to handle the stress of life. Stressors add up until there is the "straw that broke the camel's back." Someone who has had negative tests in the past can begin producing antibodies that result in tissue destruction that eventually manifests as gluten sensitivity and/or celiac disease. **Tip:** Know your genetic vulnerability and know the risks of eating gluten before you undergo a gluten challenge test.

You can read up on all of the Cyrex Arrays and other available lab tests in the [Products](#) section of www.theDr.com.

Question: What does a positive gluten sensitivity test mean?

It means that your immune system is reacting to an exposure to gluten. If you are not eating gluten, the test is positive for one of the following reasons:

- **Hidden exposure to gluten:** Gluten is present in trace amounts in some gluten-free foods.
- **Cross-reactive food:** Your immune system mistakes a non-gluten-containing food for gluten and produces antibodies against gluten.
- **Cross-reactive virus or bacteria:** Some viruses and bacteria "look like" gluten to the immune system. In this case of mistaken identity, your body will produce antibodies against gluten.
- **Poorly-functioning GI tract:** In these cases, you may consider Array #2, the Intestinal Antigenic Permeability Screen.
- **Unknown cause:** When gluten sensitivity test is positive due to an unknown reason, your clinician may suspect refractory sprue, which is a complex gluten-related disorder that is resistant or unresponsive to a gluten-free diet.

References:

1. Laurin, P., et al. "Even small amounts of gluten cause relapse in children with celiac disease." Journal of Pediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition 34.1 (2002): 26-30.
2. Murray, J. A. "The widening spectrum of celiac disease." American Journal of Clinical Nutrition 69.3 (1999): 354-365.
3. Ventura, A., et al. "Duration of exposure to gluten and risk for autoimmune disorders in patients with celiac disease." Gastroenterology 117.2 (1999): 297-303.

theDr.com

877-GLUTEN1 (458-8361)
© www.theDr.com



The Gluten Summit
Brought to you by theDr.com