

# Celiac Disease Testing

Dear Primary Care Provider,

Your patient would like to be considered for celiac disease testing. This letter offers guidance on the labs to order, how to interpret them and when a referral should be considered. We appreciate your care and consideration. If you have questions, call us at 615-909-2604.

Sincerely,

The Vanderbilt Celiac Disease Clinic

## How to prepare your patient for blood testing to diagnose celiac disease

Your patient must have eaten gluten consistently for many weeks at the time of the blood draw for accurate serology testing. Testing will not be accurate for patients eating a gluten-free diet because they will eventually test negative. Labs do not require fasting and can be drawn at any time.

### Lab order

- Tissue transglutaminase (tTG) IgA
- Tissue transglutaminase (tTG) IgG
- Total serum IgA

We recommend choosing a tTG test with reflex anti-endomysial antibody (EMA) if your lab offers it. A positive EMA increases the specificity.

The tTG IgA panel typically includes a total IgA level and does not require a separate order, which is important because the test is not reliable in patients with IgA deficiency. If your patient is concerned about celiac disease and has IgA deficiency, consider testing the level of deamidated gliadin peptides (DGP) or discuss further with a celiac disease specialist since there is a higher prevalence of celiac disease in patients with IgA deficiency.

### Lab interpretation

Positive serology test results do not confirm celiac disease in adults. If the tTG IgA or the tTG IgG is positive, your patient will need an upper endoscopy with duodenal biopsies to confirm a diagnosis. Please refer them to a gastroenterology clinic immediately. Your patient should **not** stop eating gluten before the biopsy.

An elevated total IgA level with a negative tTG IgA and a negative tTG IgG is not indicative of celiac disease, so the patient will not require further evaluation.

## The Vanderbilt Celiac Disease Clinic

We are the only dedicated celiac disease clinic in the Southeast. We offer patients the following services and support:

- Upper endoscopy
- Confirmation of a prior diagnosis/second opinion
- Counseling with a trained dietitian and social support to help your patient achieve a gluten-free diet
- Participation in clinical trials for drug therapy

## Refer your patient

Fax referrals to 615-912-3043 and include:

- The patient's name, date of birth and contact number
- Results of any blood work specifically related to celiac disease, including tTG, EMA and DGP, as well as human leukocyte antigen (HLA) genes, if available
- Gastroenterology records, especially procedures, biopsies and CT scans

### Prepare your patient for the referral

- Patients without a confirmed celiac disease diagnosis who are eating a diet containing gluten should continue eating the same diet until they are evaluated.
- Patients who are eating a gluten-free diet and have not received serology testing while eating a diet containing gluten may need to perform a gluten challenge to confirm a diagnosis. Since this process can be frustrating for them, we will review with them how a diagnosis is achieved to help them better understand the testing procedure.

If your patient has positive serology, needs a confirmatory biopsy and is given a wait time greater than four weeks, call our office at 615-909-2604 to expedite their evaluation.