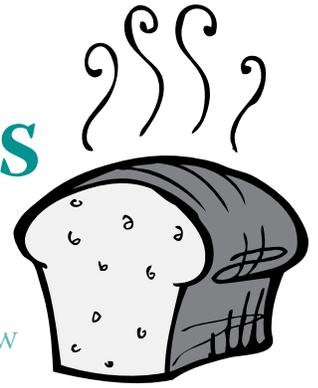


Margy's Story

My Favorite Things



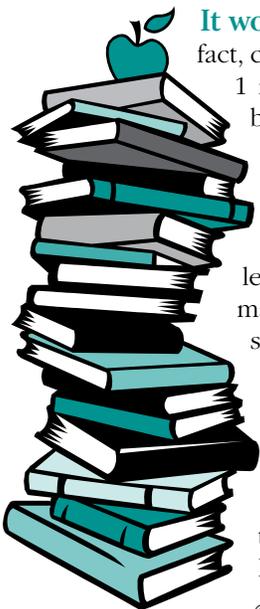
Blueberry pancakes. Warm rosemary bread. A plate piled high with pasta puttanesca. Steamy wheat popovers. There are a hundred more reasons why I do not want a diagnosis of celiac and most of them are food! I loved to eat. How ironic that my favorite things would turn out to be the enemy.

Writing and research are two more favorite things. I suppose without them, I may never have been diagnosed. A little knowledge may be a dangerous thing but a whole lot can set you free. So it was with me. In three months I gained 15 pounds. My hair was falling out by the handful when I shampooed. I was tired. My thyroid medication had just been changed so I queried my endocrinologist (“endo doctor”) but she quickly dismissed the symptoms to “age and menopause”. But symptoms are the way my body says “something isn’t quite normal” and I have learned to be a good listener. I know a lot about diet, taking supplements and staying healthy. How could I be doing everything right and feel so wrong?

The researcher in me took action. The easy bruising might be a vitamin C deficiency. My hair needed B vitamins and dry skin might mean low vitamin A. Hmm. My endo doctor does monitor vitamins and thought my 1000 IU vitamin D dose too high. To her surprise, I was woefully low. It took 5000 IU daily (and months) to get it back to normal. My other concerns were ignored. So I bought bigger clothes but kept looking for “the” answer.

A short time later, I discovered a research paper that stated 33% of auto-immune thyroid patients tested positive for celiac. Many of the symptoms matched mine. Not one to self-diagnose, I faxed it to the endo doctor, asking to be tested. She declined but my family doctor agreed. Good thing! Although blood tests aren’t always reliable in picking up gluten allergies—the culprit behind celiac—mine were unquestionably positive. No more bread for me! Plus, research reveals our grains are hybrid, genetically altered to be bug and disease resistant. Unfortunately, celiacs are born without the enzyme to break down gluten, the protein found in hybrid grains. Since celiac is genetic, severity may depend on whether one or both parents passed their genes on to you. It’s a life-long commitment to a gluten-free way of life, not just to grains but to any food with gluten as an ingredient.

“Celiac symptoms are so subtle that 97% of those who have it are undiagnosed. I was one of them.”



It would have been nice not to have reached the low point I did. But celiac is not a “loud” disease. In fact, celiac symptoms are so subtle that 97% of those who have it are undiagnosed. I was one of them. Statistically, 1 in 100 people currently have it, a number which should be higher. In Italy where celiac is recognized, babies are tested at birth. As usual, the United States is woefully behind in taking a pro-active stand against disease while millions of celiacs suffer the silent damage. Given the compromise to nutrients, who knows how many disorders that celiac may be a factor in yet is basically ignored?

A year into the diet and retesting shows my gluten levels still a little high. I’m a work in progress as I’ve learned it can take up to two years for my body to “normalize”. The GI system needs to heal and since many nutrients are “manufactured” there (including the A, B, D and K vitamins I was missing), my nutritional status is recovering, too. Good thing I own a supplement company! Oh, and that weight problem? Gone—two months after starting the gluten-free diet.

Ultimately, I still believe that the body can heal itself when given the nutrients and the tools to do so. In my case, it is a pretty specialized tool box! But I’m determined. I fired the endo doctor (a first for me). My family doctor turned out to be a blessing. It’s a bit of trial and error, but we’re a good team. However, one thing she can’t give me is a good recipe for bread. If there’s a celiac out there who has one, I would love to hear from you!

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