



Canadian Celiac Association

L'Association canadienne de la maladie coeliaque

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Importance of Celiac Serology Tests

"We now have evidence that the increased awareness and diagnosis of celiac disease would benefit not only the patients but would result in health care costs savings"

- Peter HR Green, M.D., Professor of Clinical Medicine,
Director of the Celiac Disease Centre, Columbia University Medical Centre

Early diagnosis of celiac disease benefits the patient, Ontario and costs less for all involved:

Benefits for Patient:

- Avoids further damage to the small intestine once a gluten-free diet commences
- Relieves symptoms and improves quality of life
- Lowers the risk of related complications (including but not limited to osteoporosis, anaemia, and cancer)
- Reduces morbidity and human suffering
- Avoids putting patient through long testing processes for other diseases with similar symptoms
- Celiac disease can occur in combination with other diseases (type 1 diabetes mellitus, osteoporosis, Down syndrome, autoimmune hepatitis, autoimmune thyroid disease, Turner syndrome, lymphomas); therefore automatic testing for celiac disease would provide more accurate diagnosis
- Supports families; celiac disease is an inherited disease and high-risk relatives need to be tested
- Deals proactively with rising rates of celiac disease

Benefits for Government:

- Avoids costs of unnecessary testing for other diseases
- Lowers misdiagnoses (such as Irritable Bowel Syndrome, Lactose Intolerance, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Diverticulitis, GERD, Anorexia Nervosa, etc.) and therefore avoids unnecessary treatments that cost money and may take up needed space in hospitals
- Minimizes likelihood of complications, such as cancer, to further save on treatments and hospital space
- Reduces morbidity
- Testing provided by the government will result in greater awareness of celiac disease
- Allows government to better support the community
- Prior to diagnosis celiac patients average 21.4 sick days a year, post diagnosis celiac patients average 3.6 sick days a year (Celiac UK 2006 survey)

Conclusion:

Currently, the cost for an effective celiac disease blood test is about \$60 (TTG-IgA ab in conjunction with a serum Iga level). While it is understandable that the cost for the test is not negligible, it has now been proven in studies that early diagnosis of celiac disease not only helps the patient but that it also has a positive economic impact.

Government-funded serology tests will save the costs of expensive and ineffective tests and treatments for conditions patients do not have and will prevent the development of additional serious medical complications that would develop without the diagnosis. Celiac serology tests will also provide an accurate diagnosis and better outcome for patients who suffer from celiac disease in combination with other health issues. Finally, it will provide at-risk family members with necessary information about their own condition.

The test will save the government healthcare costs by avoiding testing and treatments for other diseases that may have similar symptoms. Costly complications and deaths from untreated celiac disease may also be avoided.

As the incidence of celiac disease steadily increases, government-funded testing will help inform our medical professionals of this hidden and unheeded epidemic allowing the province to help people affected by the disease and avoiding unnecessary long-term costs.