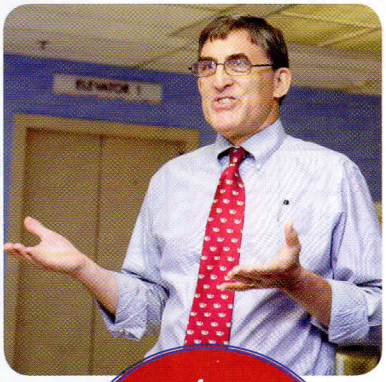

Ask the Doc

Interview with **Dr. John Snyder** of the Celiac Disease Program at Children's National Medical Center

BY **MAUREEN STANLEY**
DELIGHT ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The Celiac Disease Program at Children's National Medical Center is paving the way for treating both the mind and bodies of patients and families living with celiac disease. This fall, we've called on Dr. John Snyder to help our readers learn to cope with the change to a gluten-free lifestyle

4 Tips for families with celiac disease!

John Snyder, MD, is the chief of the Division of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition at Children's National Medical Center located in Washington, DC. Under the direction of Dr. Snyder, Children's National is helping to improve the way pediatric celiac disease is diagnosed and treated. Their Celiac Disease Program brings together a team of expert physicians, nurses, nutritional consultants and professional counselors dedicated to developing a national model for detecting and treating celiac disease in children and families.

1 Treating the Mind & Body

DGF: Children's National Medical Center believes the mind and the body must be treated together to ensure the best outcome for patients. How can parents help their child through the "grieving process" of celiac disease? How do parents ensure not only the physical but psychological impact of diagnosis is addressed?

DR. SNYDER: A family's approach in how they handle this diagnosis is key. When families are able to look at celiac disease in a positive manner, this helps their child better understand and deal with the diagnosis.

Having a dialog with your child on a regular basis is essential to being aware of how your child is handling this new lifestyle change. An openness for your child to be seen by a professional counselor is also is very helpful.

Children's National Medical Center's Celiac Disease Program includes a psychologist to help children and their families adjust to the lifestyle changes associated with celiac disease.

2 What to do if a child cheats on the diet?

DGF: What if parents suspect their child is sneaking gluten-filled foods outside of the home? Should parents have their child's blood work checked routinely to ensure their child is maintaining a gluten-free diet?

DR SNYDER: There are children who have a really hard time after their diagnosis and feel "it's not fair."

Parents need to convey that there's nothing the child did to make this happen. It's simply how their body was made up and they have no control over it. When there is a concern from the family that the child is not following the gluten-free diet and may be "cheating," one way to know is from the child's symptoms.

However, not all children show outward symptoms, so there can be children who are sneaking gluten, but not showing much in the way of indictors. That is when the blood tests are done.

We routinely perform these same antibody tests used to screen and diagnose celiac disease once a year. These tests will tell us if the child is following a gluten-free diet. If the child is following the gluten-free diet carefully, then their antibodies will be normal. If the child's antibody levels are not normal, then it means they are getting gluten in some fashion.

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Learn more at www.ChildrensNational.org/Celiac