

## Transcript- Do You Feel Like Everyone Has a Gluten Allergy?

**Guy:** Well, there sure is something strange in the neighborhood. It's called gluten! Welcome back to The Ozarks This Morning on News Talk KRMS, the voice of the lake of the Ozarks. With us on the line, we have Dr. John Rodriguez, Chief Medical Officer of Healthcare2U, a passionate care facility. He's been in the business for 20 years, and we're going to talk about gluten today. Maybe some of the mysteries and some of the myths. But just kind of explain a little bit, what is gluten?

**Dr. Rodriguez:** Sure, gluten is a protein that's found in a lot of wheat products. Barley, rye, etc., which I'm sure many of us have eaten before. And for some, gluten doesn't like our intestinal tract in a lot of people. But once it hits that small intestine, it sets up an inflammation response that just creates a lot of problems. So, this you see in the messaging all over the place now; gluten-free, etc., and why we need that, and some foods to stay away from it.

**Guy:** Now, some people say that they get sick from it, and others say they feel bad from it, but when you said intestinal and that it inflames, that's a little bit different than what I thought it was.

**Dr. Rodriguez:** Yeah, so really, this is an undiagnosed or underdiagnosed condition. A lot of people suffer from it but don't really know they have it. They just develop a lot of nausea, or some cramping when they go out and eat the food, or a little bit of diarrhea, etc., and they just kind of chalk it up to bad food. But in reality, a lot of people are underdiagnosed with this condition and go on with life and, and never really know they have it. Now, there are some people out there who do it automatically, see this and decide they don't like gluten. They just kind of intuitively have put together, you know, "I stopped gluten, and I feel better." They tend to diagnose themselves in a lot of ways. So, the point being is that I think being an underdiagnosed disease, you probably need to see your primary care provider if you suffer from any of these symptoms and maybe get a better diagnosis.

**Guy:** By the way, Dr. John is on the line with us, and if you want to ask a question of him, he'll be with us for about another nine minutes or so. Call 573-302-7000 if you have a question about gluten. So, the best way to know if you're allergic to it is to get tested, is that what you're saying?

**Dr. Rodriguez:** That's correct. If you have some of these symptoms, you may want to talk to your primary care provider. There are some simple blood tests, like antibody testing, that help shed light on a lot of the symptoms. Most people who have these symptoms don't have gluten or celiac disease. Having said that, if you do have these symptoms and have been struggling with them for years, you may want to get checked out. It may be a simple fix of a simple blood test ending in you staying away from gluten, and that fixes your problems. It is a very underdiagnosed condition, and it can lead to a lot of medical conditions like anemia, osteoporosis, or skin conditions if you don't diagnose it properly. Most people don't end up having anemia, but that requires blood transfusions. You need to understand that if you see your doctor and you've got anemia that's been there for a while, and no one can figure it out, and they want to bring up the topic of celiac disease that's been undiagnosed, even primary care providers miss it. So, it's just something to be aware of.

**Guy:** If you have celiac disease, gluten is it, I don't want to say it's like the kiss of death, but that's not a very good thing to you. Is it?

**Dr. Rodriguez:** No, it is- actually, it's been classified as an autoimmune disease, kind of like rheumatoid arthritis and lupus. What happens is that gluten, being a protein that our bodies don't like, gets into the intestinal tract, for whatever reason, once it hits that small intestine, the body sets up an immune response and it goes crazy. And it basically prevents the absorption of nutrients like zinc and iron, etc., which leads to anemia. Then that's when, you know, you have these symptoms, and you go to your doctor, and then you have this anemia that no one can figure out what it is- it may be undiagnosed celiac disease. And so, again, testing is really simple. It's just a simple blood test, so once you bring that up, and you make that diagnosis, my gosh, your life can be a whole new life without gluten in your diet. So, it's really simple.

**Guy:** Is there a thing like maybe falling off the wagon? So, you know, it's part of the wheat family. We get that, and all. But, if you have a piece of toast or something that has gluten in it, is that harmful?

**Dr. Rodriguez:** Yes.

**Guy:** Is that able to disseminate?

**Dr. Rodriguez:** Well, yeah. Everyone reacts differently. So, you can have different variations or degrees of gluten sensitivity. But for some people, yes, just one little bite sometimes of a gluten product can really set them off. So yeah, it can be impressive with some patients, just the degree of sensitivity to it. Having said that, it is an underdiagnosed condition. So yeah, if you have these symptoms, you should bring that up to your provider.

**Guy:** Okay. You've been a healthcare provider for over 20 years, haven't you?

**Dr. Rodriguez:** That's correct, yes. I love primary care. I've enjoyed it and all these interesting diseases that we come across, including celiac disease.

**Guy:** Yeah. Okay. So now, please give us some of these symptoms that we need to be looking out for. You've been mentioning. By the way, Dr. John Rodriguez is on the line, and you can contact us right here at 302-7000 if you have a question for the doc. So, give us some of these symptoms.

**Dr. Rodriguez:** So, the very common one is just going to be some abdominal pain, maybe some cramping, maybe some diarrhea. And sometimes, no symptoms at all. That's the funny thing, you know? You could c- show up to your doctor for your annual physical feeling okay, and you have this anemia, and they can't figure out where it's coming from, but you don't have any symptoms. Most people are going to have something, whether it's nausea, cramping, gas, constipation, and even weight loss sometimes. Those are the most common. Although, that said, those symptoms are not usually caused by celiac disease. You still need to be seen by your physician.

**Guy:** How long does it take to wean yourself off gluten? Is it like, you take it off the diet in a day, a week, or a month?

**Dr. Rodriguez:** Oh, it's immediate- within a day, you're going to feel so much better. If you have those symptoms and think, "You know, I wonder if I have it", and you stop and see an improvement, you may want to see your provider and get an official diagnosis.

**Guy:** So, in other words, today is Tuesday- you could stop it today and then Wednesday, you start feeling fine. And then, if you just want to kind of test it again, and say, "Hmm," and then on Thursday, you eat something that has gluten in it, you should feel immediately like junk again.

**Dr. Rodriguez:** That's right, that's the poor man's test, but you really should get an official diagnosis from your doctor.

**Guy:** I'm going to be talking about sugar now. When you get sugar into the system, and gluten, are those two like two, two guys that want to kind of join up against you?

**Dr. Rodriguez:** Yeah, you know, that's a good point because there are similarities in a lot of the symptomatology with sugar and gluten. Although, again, they're not the same per se, one's a protein, and one's a sugar, they do react the same in a lot of sense in terms of the symptoms. You want to be careful. Again, you still want to seek your provider out and go over the symptoms. But yeah, I'm very sensitive to sugars. If I eat something too sweet, I don't feel good.

**Guy:** All right. If people want to get in touch with you, Dr. Rodriguez, how can they do that?

**Dr. Rodriguez:** Go through the Healthcare2U website, so Healthcare2U is one of the largest primary care providers of services in the US for companies and employees. So they go through the website, [healthcare2u.com](http://healthcare2u.com), and can reach me there.

**Guy:** Well, this has been fascinating. And gluten, it's the question that got me there- does it feel like everyone you know has a gluten allergy?

**Dr. Rodriguez:** It's a good thing to make the assumption, right? But that said, if you do have the symptoms, you do want to seek out some care.

**Guy:** All right. All right. Thank you so much, Dr. Rodriguez. We look forward to talking with you again.

**Dr. Rodriguez:** Very good, sir. Take care.

**Guy:** All right. That's Dr. John Rodriguez, and he's the Chief Medical Officer of Healthcare2U, and he's been in the healthcare business for 20 years.