

Medical Information **Assignment Answers**

4. Do a search for information on “celiac sprue” on NOAH, InteliHealth, the Mayo Clinic, and MedlinePlus, and compare results. Note:

- Which site had the largest number of results?
- Which was the easiest to navigate and understand?
- Which had the most scientific information?
- Are there any alternative treatments for this condition?
- Which included links to discussion groups or associations for people who have this?

Answer/Comments:

One of the first things you should notice is that this condition is now known as “celiac disease.” With NOAH, you get the same number of basic results (18) regardless of whether you search “celiac sprue” or just “celiac”. “Celiac disease” gets you 1529 results. At InteliHealth, the use of quote marks for phrases makes quite a difference. You get 9 topics and 17 documents search celiac sprue (no quotes), and only 2 topics and 8 documents searching “celiac sprue” with the quote marks. Just celiac gets you 9 topics and 15 documents. “Celiac disease” gets you 13 topics and 10 documents. At the Mayo Clinic site, 4 results are found for a search of “celiac sprue”, 20 for just celiac, 17 for celiac disease or “celiac disease.” Medline Plus returned the same number of results with all three searches, organized into folders on the left, which are labeled Health Topics, Laboratory Tests, and so on. Many might prefer to use the A-Z listings rather than the search box; the results are more consistent using that method.

Quality of the results differed somewhat, too. The links to the subpages of the Celiac Sprue Association from NOAH did not work, though the one to the home page did, and you could get to the other info from that. They worked from MedlinePlus; no referral to them from InteliHealth or Mayo. InteliHealth’s referrals were to associations of medical professionals only, and none to groups of others with this condition.

The issue of ease of navigation is somewhat subjective. I found both NOAH and MedlinePlus to be clearly laid out on the home page, and as long as I continued to browse, I had no trouble. I thought the folder results from Medline using the search box might be confusing for some. I found both InteliHealth and especially the Mayo site very dense, and the font too small, even after making adjustments to my browser. I found the ads on the Mayo site somewhat annoying, even though there weren’t many of them.

Medline Plus offered the most scientific info.

Since this condition is treated totally with a change in diet rather than medication or surgery, no alternative or homeopathic treatments were listed.

No discussion boards at NOAH; it does have a link to the Celiac Sprue Association, but it isn't clear until you go to their site that it is an association of people with the condition, and that there are local chapters. IntelliHealth offers discussion boards, but you have to register (free). No discussion group at Mayo. MedlinePlus provides links to groups such as CSA; scroll all the way down to the bottom of the page under "organizations."