

FOR THE LOVE OF BREAD



Coeliac disease is a serious illness where the body's immune system attacks its own tissues when you eat gluten. This causes damage to the lining of the gut and means the body can't properly absorb nutrients from food. Coeliac disease is not an allergy or food intolerance.

The impact of undiagnosed coeliac disease on children is huge. By highlighting the main symptoms of coeliac disease, we hope to find the half a million people living with undiagnosed coeliac disease in the UK.

HOW COMMON IS COELIAC DISEASE?

Coeliac disease is common and affects one in 100 people. However only 30% who have the condition have been diagnosed which means there are currently nearly half a million people who have coeliac disease but don't yet know.

If a first degree family member (such as mother, father, sister or brother) has the condition then the chances of having it increase to one in ten.

GLUTEN INTOLERANCE - Symptoms range from mild to severe, and can include bloating, diarrhoea, nausea, wind, constipation, tiredness, mouth ulcers, sudden or unexpected weight loss (but not in all cases), and anaemia.

IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME (IBS) - Because of the way that coeliac disease can affect the gut, it's frequently misdiagnosed as IBS.

DERMATITIS HERPETIFORMIS (DH) - is the skin manifestation of coeliac disease which occurs as a rash that commonly occurs on the elbows, knees, shoulders, buttocks and face, with red, raised patches often with blisters. It affects around one in 3,300 people.

CAUSES - Some people have instructions in their genetic makeup which make their body react to gluten as if it were an unwelcome invader. This means that coeliac disease is an autoimmune disease. It is caused by a reaction of the immune system to gluten – a protein found in wheat, barley and rye. When someone with coeliac disease eats gluten, their immune system reacts by damaging the lining of the small intestine. The small intestine is between the stomach and the large intestine (the colon). In a healthy small intestine, there are small, finger like projections (villi) that allow the body to absorb nutrients from food into the blood. If you have coeliac disease, these villi become flat and you have difficulty absorbing nutrients.

We know from research that people with the condition have genes which mean they may develop coeliac disease but we don't yet know why. It is important to understand that people with untreated coeliac disease will most likely be experiencing problems from additional ailments which can be caused by a lack of the crucial nutrients your body needs to keep you healthy.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR COELIAC DISEASE

Once diagnosed, the only treatment for coeliac disease is a gluten free diet. Gluten is found in wheat, barley and rye. Some people are also sensitive to oats. Once gluten is removed from the diet, you should start to feel much better.

WEBSITES AND HELPFUL INFORMATION

<https://www.coeliac.org.uk/home/>

<https://www.coeliac.org.uk/document-library/4907-managing-coeliacdisease/?return=/information-and-support/coeliac-disease/about-coeliac-disease/>

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Currently in the UK, around 500,000 people are living with distressing symptoms that affect their everyday life. Simple activities like food shopping or grabbing a sandwich on the go become a daily chore when you can't eat gluten. And those important milestones like holidays and family meals can feel like a lottery with the worry of finding safe food or being labelled fussy or a picky eater by those who assume gluten free is a fad and not a medical necessity.

If you feel you may need some support when living with coeliac disease, you can contact Care first. Care first is a leading provider of confidential, professional counselling, information and advice services. Our services include; telephone counselling, information services and online support. Call Care first on the Freephone number provided by your organisation and you can speak to a professional in confidence.