



Press release

Immediate issue: 1 March 2016

MORRISONS SIGNS UP TO COELIAC UK'S GLUTEN-FREE GUARANTEE

Coeliac UK, the national Charity for people with coeliac disease, has boosted its aim to improve availability of gluten-free food in UK supermarkets with Morrisons signing up to the Charity's Gluten-free Guarantee campaign.

The Coeliac UK Gluten-free Guarantee campaign, asks supermarkets to commit to having a basket of eight core items of gluten-free staple food across all stores, making it easier for people with coeliac disease to manage their diet. The eight gluten-free products in the Guarantee are: white bread, pasta, cereal, flour, cereal bars, rolls, crackers and one other bread (brown or seeded).

All 494 of Morrisons stores across the UK, have signed up to the Gluten-free Guarantee and will stock one of each of these eight items from 1 March 2016.

Sarah Sleet, Chief Executive of Coeliac UK, said: "In a recent survey about shopping habits 74% of Coeliac UK Members who responded said they have to visit more than one supermarket to complete their shopping. It is wonderful that Morrisons has joined the campaign so that people with coeliac disease will be able to buy these eight staple gluten-free items in each of its stores. Things have improved beyond recognition in the last few years as the range of products now available in supermarkets continues to grow, but many will be surprised that for most people with coeliac disease shopping for gluten-free items is still a real challenge, and becoming increasingly so, as the NHS in England continues to cut prescribing support for patients."

"Diagnosis levels of coeliac disease are increasing, with a four-fold rise in the rate of diagnosis over the last 20 years. It is essential that supermarkets have sufficient stock available across all their stores to meet this increased demand and mitigate the need for customers to trawl a number of stores to find staple items, and for this reason we are very pleased to see one of the UK's leading supermarkets commit to Coeliac UK's Gluten-free Guarantee," continued Ms Sleet.

Coeliac disease is an autoimmune disease caused by a reaction to gluten, a protein found in wheat, barley and rye. Left untreated it may lead to infertility, osteoporosis and small bowel cancer.

One in 100 people in the UK has coeliac disease, with the prevalence rising to one in 10 for close family members. However, research indicates that only 24% of those with the condition are diagnosed, leaving an estimated half a million people in the UK undiagnosed and untreated.

Symptoms can include bloating, abdominal pain, nausea, constipation, diarrhoea, wind, tiredness, anaemia, headaches, mouth ulcers, recurrent miscarriages, weight loss (but not in all cases), skin problems, depression, joint or bone pain and nerve problems. Not everyone with coeliac disease experiences gut related symptoms; any area of the body can be affected. The symptoms of coeliac disease range from mild to severe and can vary between individuals.

Ends

Notes to editor

- Coeliac disease is a serious illness where the body's immune system reacts to gluten found in food, making the body attack itself.
- A wide range of case studies are available on request from Coeliac UK.
- Gluten is a protein found in wheat (including spelt), rye and barley. Some people are also sensitive to oats. Obvious sources of gluten include breads, pastas, flours, cereals, cakes and biscuits. It is often used as an ingredient in many favourite foods such as fish fingers, sausages, gravies, sauces and soy sauce.
- The Coeliac UK Gluten-free Guarantee campaign was launched in 2014 with Asda as the first supermarket to sign up. For more information please see www.coeliac.org.uk/GfG
- Coeliac UK has a Helpline on 0333 332 2033 and further information can be found at www.coeliac.org.uk.