



Press release

IS IT COELIAC DISEASE? CAMPAIGN COMES TO GLASGOW

Glasgow: 6 – 10 June 2016 Coeliac UK, the national Charity for people with coeliac disease, hopes to reach people living with undiagnosed coeliac disease in the Glasgow area with its weeklong pop up event taking place in Scotland for the first time.

One in 100 people in the UK has coeliac disease, but the autoimmune condition is greatly undiagnosed, meaning there are around half a million people in the UK who are currently without a diagnosis. There are 1,196,335 people covered by the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde health board, which means that approximately 11,963 people from this region will have coeliac disease. Out of this group, only an estimated 3230, or 27% of them will be diagnosed, leaving an estimated 8700 local people currently undiagnosed and potentially experiencing ill health from symptoms and storing up long term health problems for the future.

Coeliac UK's campaign 'Is it coeliac disease?' will be sharply focused on exposing the link between anaemia and undiagnosed coeliac disease as well as other symptoms, as the charity hunts for the missing half a million people with undiagnosed coeliac disease across the UK, including nearly 40,000 in Scotland.

Glasgow will host Coeliac UK's first pop up event to take place in Scotland as the charity brings its campaign roadshow to cities across the UK in a bid to increase diagnosis rates. Coeliac disease is not an allergy or intolerance but a serious autoimmune disease where the body's immune system damages the lining of the small bowel when gluten, a protein found in wheat, barley and rye, is eaten. There is no cure and no medication; the only treatment is a strict gluten-free diet for life. Left untreated, coeliac disease can lead to a number of complications including osteoporosis and, in rare cases, even small bowel cancer.

The campaign launched by actress and Coeliac UK's Patron, Caroline Quentin last year highlights some of the most common symptoms of coeliac disease, which is caused by a reaction to gluten, and prompts people experiencing symptoms to ask themselves, "is it coeliac disease?"

The Coeliac UK pop up event will be situated in the heart of Glasgow on Buchanan Street, at the top of Buchanan Street, next to the statue of Donald Dewar from Monday 6 to Friday 10 June

Opening times for the stand:

Monday 6 June to Friday 10 June: 10am – 5pm Buchanan Street (top end), Glasgow

Experts and local volunteers from the charity will be on hand to discuss symptoms and provide advice on how to get diagnosed. Testing for coeliac disease will be available at the pop event, for those found to be particularly at risk. Help and advice on living gluten-free will also be available, including the opportunity to talk to people from the local support group who have been diagnosed and are on a gluten-free diet.

As well as the pop up event, the **'Is it coeliac disease?'** campaign is reaching out to the half a million people in the UK living with undiagnosed coeliac disease through information in GP surgeries, radio and digital advertising, social media, and information to healthcare professionals to refresh their knowledge of the condition and its symptoms.

An integral part of the campaign is the UK's first online assessment for coeliac disease via a dedicated campaign website, www.isitcoeliacdisease.org.uk. Based on the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) clinical guideline on coeliac disease, the assessment gives people more confidence to seek further medical advice from their GP. Upon completing the assessment, they will receive an email with the results which will indicate whether their symptoms are potentially linked to coeliac disease.

Over 40,000 people have already taken the online assessment since the website was launched. Anyone attending the pop up event can complete a paper version of the assessment and take away the results for their next visit to the GP, should it indicate a need for further investigation.

Although not everyone with coeliac disease will experience them, other symptoms of coeliac disease may include frequent bouts of diarrhoea, stomach pain and cramping, regular mouth ulcers, ongoing fatigue, lots of gas and bloating, nausea and vomiting.

Sarah Sleet, chief executive of Coeliac UK, said: "It's horrendous that so many people are still undiagnosed which is why we are actively going out into communities like Glasgow to bring more attention to the condition. Anyone in the city or surrounding area who thinks they might be suffering with symptoms should come to our stand to find out more about the condition. We want to help put them on a pathway to diagnosis and avoid potentially life threatening long term health complications. Or you can check your symptoms through our online assessment tool, and if you think you may have coeliac disease, go to your doctor and ask for a blood test but don't stop eating gluten until you are tested otherwise critical tests will not work."

Ends

Notes to the 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.
- Average time to diagnosis is 13 years
- 1 in 4 people diagnosed with coeliac disease had previously been diagnosed with IBS
- Coeliac UK has a Helpline on 0333 332 2033 and further information can be found at www.coeliac.org.uk