

Press Release: Immediate Issue

## **DR CHRIS STEELE DIAGNOSED WITH COELIAC DISEASE**

Dr Chris Steele MBE announced on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2010, on ITV's *This Morning* where he is the show's resident doctor, that he has been diagnosed with coeliac disease.

Coeliac disease is an autoimmune disease caused by intolerance to gluten. Damage is caused to the gut lining when gluten is eaten. There is no cure or medication for the condition and the only treatment is life-long adherence to a strict gluten-free diet. Without a gluten-free diet, the disease can lead to other conditions, such as malnutrition, osteoporosis, infertility, multiple miscarriages and can cause bowel cancer.

Ironically, Dr Chris has been an Ambassador of Coeliac UK, the national charity for people with coeliac disease for the past three years. However, over the past few months he has been suffering with abdominal symptoms and his own GP referred him to a gastroenterologist.

Following blood tests and then a biopsy the results came back to confirm he does have coeliac disease – at the age of 64.

“I was very honoured to be asked a few years back to be Ambassador of Coeliac UK as I wanted to give as much support as I could to help raise the awareness of the condition in the media and to the general public,” Dr Chris explained.

“However, I never dreamt that I myself would then be diagnosed! I think I have been having symptoms of diarrhoea, abdominal pain and fatigue on and off for many years but it wasn't until they got so bad recently that I did anything about it and I will be encouraging everyone with similar symptoms to see their GP and be tested rather than suffering in silence,” he said.

At least 1 in 100 people in the UK has coeliac disease. However only 12.5% of those have currently been diagnosed and Coeliac UK estimates that there are over half a million people undiagnosed in the UK.

The symptoms of coeliac disease range from being mild to severe and can vary between individuals. Symptoms include bloating, abdominal pain, nausea, constipation, diarrhoea, wind, tiredness, anaemia, headaches, mouth ulcers, weight loss – but not in all cases, skin problems, depression, joint or bone pain and nerve problems.

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**Notes to editors:**

1. An online petition to Downing Street (<http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/coeliacdisease/>) has been launched by the Charity that is encouraging people to support the petition to ask the government to improve diagnosis rates of coeliac disease.
2. The NICE guidelines on the diagnosis of coeliac disease were published in May 2009. For more information go to [www.coeliac.org.uk/niceguidelines](http://www.coeliac.org.uk/niceguidelines)
3. Studies show that if a family member has coeliac disease there is an increased risk of 1 in 10 to other family members.
4. 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.
5. Not everyone with coeliac disease experiences gut related symptoms; any area of the body can be affected.
6. A range of case studies of men, women and children are available on request from Coeliac UK.
7. For more information please go to [www.coeliac.org.uk](http://www.coeliac.org.uk) or call our Helpline on 0845 305 2060.