

COELIAC UK'S STATEMENT ON SELF-TESTING KITS FOR COELIAC DISEASE

Current status

Self-testing kits use a pin-prick to obtain a finger-tip blood sample and look for the antibodies present in coeliac disease.

Coeliac UK position

Coeliac disease is estimated to affect 1 in 100 people in the UK. There is a serious problem with under diagnosis of coeliac disease – it's estimated that only 10-15% people with the condition are diagnosed. In addition, research with Coeliac UK Members by the University of Oxford, Health Economics Research Centre in 2006 showed that on average it takes 13 years for an individual to be diagnosed.

Self-testing kits may be a welcome tool in helping people on their journey to a full diagnosis of coeliac disease. There are a number of issues that should be considered by anyone thinking of using the kit:

- whilst the kit is as accurate as the blood tests used by GPs, there will be a small number of results that are not accurate. **For this reason it is important that anyone who has had a negative self-test result, but has strongly suggestive symptoms of coeliac disease or ongoing concerns should see their GP.** A GP will be able to assess the full range of symptoms and may decide to investigate further for coeliac disease, regardless of the blood test result
- **the test will not work properly if it is used on someone who has already reduced or completely taken gluten out of their diet**
- **anyone who has a positive self-test result should see their GP as soon as possible.** Your GP may carry out further blood tests at the local laboratory to check your self-test results. We recommend that people confirm the diagnosis by undergoing a small bowel biopsy. This involves a thin flexible tube, known as an endoscope, being passed via the mouth and stomach and into the small intestine. Small samples of gut lining are collected (biopsies), and later examined under a microscope to check for abnormalities that are typical in coeliac disease. **Again, it is essential that gluten is not taken out of the diet before this test is done, because doing this is highly likely to cause a false negative result**
- **by visiting a GP and getting a full medical diagnosis, you will make sure that any problems associated with coeliac disease, such as osteoporosis and anaemia, are found and treated.** You will also be able to get advice from a dietitian about avoiding gluten in your diet and get prescriptions for specialist gluten-free foods as well as ongoing help with your diet.

Coeliac UK publishes '*A guide to common symptoms of coeliac disease and how to get help*' which is based on the British Society of Gastroenterology recommendations on diagnosis and is available to the public through our website www.coeliac.org.uk or by contacting our Helpline 0845 305 2060.