

Press release

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COELIAC UK SUPPORTS BSNA ON THE NEED FOR GLUTEN-FREE FOOD ON PRESCRIPTION

Ahead of Gut Feeling Week, which commences on 13th May, Coeliac UK the national charity for people with coeliac disease is supporting the need for gluten-free foods to remain on prescription, following the release of results of a survey by the British Specialist Nutrition Association (BSNA) launched on Thursday 9th May 2013.

The BSNA, the trade association for manufacturers of specialist nutritional products, asked 1,000 patients with coeliac disease for their views on gluten-free prescriptions. The survey posed questions about the access and availability of gluten-free foods and asked about individuals' attitudes towards gluten-free food on prescription.

Results released by BSNA highlighted the importance for people with coeliac disease to have access to gluten-free food on prescription and suggested that those who have had their prescriptions cut or stopped altogether found managing their gluten-free diets to be more challenging as a result. Full results of the survey can be found on the [BSNA website](#).

Sarah Sleet, Chief Executive of Coeliac UK said, "Following a gluten-free diet enables patients to live a full and healthy life. However, to do so, it is crucial that they are able to access basic gluten-free foods, such as bread, flour and pasta, which are the staples in all our diets. The BSNA's survey suggests that cuts to gluten-free prescriptions in some areas are causing difficulties for patients. The results mirror previous research carried out by Coeliac UK and others, showing that if your income is low or you are unable reach the large supermarkets, being able to access gluten-free staples such as breads and flours is very difficult. Prescriptions play a vital role in ensuring vulnerable patients are not disadvantaged."

Coeliac disease is an autoimmune condition caused by intolerance to gluten. 1 in 100 people in the UK have coeliac disease for which there is no cure and the only treatment is strict adherence to a lifelong gluten-free diet which is a medical treatment. Gluten is a protein found in wheat, barley and rye. Left untreated coeliac disease can lead to serious health complications at greater cost to the NHS. Coeliac UK's Gut Feeling Week, aims to reach the estimated half a million people with coeliac disease who have not yet received a formal diagnosis and empower them to strive for diagnosis.

Coeliac UK is assessing the impact of restrictions on gluten-free prescribing, where both the number of units and the types of staple gluten-free foods have been restricted.

For more information on the Gut Feeling campaign, visit www.coeliac.org.uk/gutfeeling.

Notes to editors:

- Coeliac disease is a serious illness where the body's immune system reacts to gluten found in food, causing the body attack itself.
- 1 in 100 people in the UK have coeliac disease, however only 10-15% of these have been diagnosed and average length of diagnosis is 13 years.
- 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 symptoms of coeliac disease range from mild to severe and can vary between individuals. Not everyone with coeliac disease experiences gut related symptoms; any area of the body can be affected.
- 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.
- Around 1200 newly diagnosed people are joining Coeliac UK every month. For further details on membership please call the Helpline on 0845 305 2060.
- Further information can be found at www.coeliac.org.uk.