



Press release
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IS IT COELIAC DISEASE? CAMPAIGN COMES TO BIRMINGHAM

Birmingham: 19 – 23 July 2016 Coeliac UK, the national charity for people with coeliac disease, hopes to reach people living with undiagnosed coeliac disease in the region with its weeklong pop up event taking place in Birmingham next week.

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. The charity is bringing its '**Is it coeliac disease?**' campaign roadshow to cities across the UK in a bid to increase diagnosis rates and this will be the first time it will be in the Midlands.

Coeliac disease is not an allergy or an 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. Coeliac disease is a lifelong illness, the only treatment is a strict gluten-free diet for life; there is no cure and no medication. 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 and prompts people experiencing symptoms to ask themselves, "**Is it coeliac disease?**"

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

The Coeliac UK pop up event will be situated in the heart of Birmingham on High Street, close to Marks & Spencer, from Tuesday 19 to Saturday 23 July.

Opening times for the stand:

Tuesday 19 to Saturday 23 July: 9.30am – 5pm High Street, Birmingham B4 7SS

Experts from the charity will be on hand to discuss symptoms and provide advice on how to get diagnosed. 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 National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines, 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.

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 Birmingham to bring more attention to the condition. Anyone in Birmingham 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 follow up 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