

Press Release

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Caroline Quentin launches Coeliac UK's Gluten Freeevolution campaign

Caroline Quentin, Patron of Coeliac UK, the national charity for people living gluten free, is today, 8 May 2017, helping to launch the charity's 'Gluten Freeevolution' to further grow the range of options of safe gluten free food when eating outside of the home for the 1.3 million Britons on a gluten free diet.

Caroline Quentin, said: "I was diagnosed with coeliac disease two years ago and, like everyone else with the condition, when I grab a bite for lunch or go out for a meal with my family, I am putting my health in the hands of those preparing and serving the food each and every time I eat out."

The Gluten Freeevolution campaign kicks off during Coeliac UK's Awareness Week (8 -14 May 2017) and aims to highlight the growing demand for improved safety, choice and availability when eating out gluten free on the move and to encourage both private and public sector caterers to provide great gluten free food that is safe from cross contamination.

The Gluten Freeevolution will be focused on improving the levels of understanding amongst caterers as well as increasing the skills and knowledge of both front and back of house staff in preparing and serving gluten free food. The charity has also launched new guidance for the catering industry which is supported by the Food Standards Agency (FSA). The new guidance is available to download now at: www.coeliac.org.uk/glutenfreeevolution.

For most people living gluten free, they must do so for life as this is the only treatment for coeliac disease, a serious autoimmune condition caused by a reaction to gluten, a protein found in wheat, barley and rye. People diagnosed with coeliac disease must maintain a strict gluten free diet for the rest of their life if they are to avoid very serious complications such as osteoporosis, infertility and although rare, small bowel cancer.

Four animated videos voiced by Caroline will introduce characters, Cyril, Sophie and Sam the ducks and their friends and are available now to watch at: www.coeliac.org.uk/meetcyril. Sarah Sleet, chief executive of Coeliac UK said: "We all remember feeding bread to ducks as children and of course, we now know that bread is bad for ducks, as bread containing gluten is for people with coeliac disease, so we thought we would play on this familiar childhood memory in our campaign. A series of four short videos focusing on the significance of the

gluten free diet and top tips for gluten free provision will run throughout the campaign and lead the Gluten Freeevolution.”

Caroline Quentin continued, “I hope that the animations and wider campaign will help to spread understanding and knowledge about the gluten free diet. It’s hard to get people to understand, especially if they have no personal experience of coeliac disease, so by adopting this fun and interesting approach Coeliac UK aims to break through those barriers.”

From a Coeliac UK survey in 2016, over 90% of people on a gluten free diet ate out over a four-week period. However, issues around responsiveness of staff and food safety still exist, with over 50% saying that the experience can be frustrating and 25% suspecting that they had been “glutened” in the previous month. Sarah Sleet continued, “This uncertainty can make eating out a lottery at times, and trusting your health to a food establishment can often be a big and worrying step, something Coeliac UK wants to improve. While Coeliac UK has made big changes on the high street through our accreditation and training, we now want to make sure we see the same gains in the public sector and when travelling. The charity wants to improve confidence and understanding on both sides, bridging the gap between the expectations of the gluten free consumer and the skills and understanding of the caterers themselves.”

“By improving understanding about gluten free provision, we hope to improve the daily frustrations experienced by so many when eating out and drive increased availability of gluten free food, whether eating gluten free at school, in hospital, on an aeroplane, having a meal with friends or grabbing a snack for lunch, to ensure no one’s life will be limited by gluten,” continued Ms Sleet.

Ends

Notes to editor

- Coeliac disease is a serious illness where the body’s immune system reacts to gluten found in food, making the body attack itself.
- 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.
- Coeliac UK’s campaigns are kindly supported by M&S who have supported the charity since 2016.
- Coeliac UK has a Helpline on 0333 332 2033 and further information can be found at www.coeliac.org.uk