

Press release

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74 year old Glastonbury man to run Great North Run in aid of Coeliac UK

John Mitchell from Glastonbury, Somerset is preparing to run his first ever half marathon participating in this year's Great North Run on 9 September 2018 at the age of 74.

He took up jogging last year after being a keen badminton player for many years. Diagnosed with coeliac disease when he was 64, he will be raising funds for Coeliac UK, the UK charity for people who need to live gluten free which is celebrating its 50th Anniversary this year.

Coeliac disease is 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, neurological conditions and although rare, small bowel cancer.

John said: "The Great North Run has been on my bucket list as I always love watching it on TV, but when I applied I did not expect to get a place. I am running to raise awareness of the disease and to raise funds for Coeliac UK."

One in hundred people in the UK has coeliac disease but around half a million people in the UK are currently undiagnosed. It still takes an astonishing 13 years on average for a person to be diagnosed. Although many people present with a range of [symptoms](#) including those that are gut related, other symptoms include mouth ulcers, anaemia, repeated miscarriages and neurological problems. The charity urges anyone that has ongoing symptoms to visit their GP and request a blood test for coeliac disease. It is essential not to remove gluten from their diet prior to testing as this could lead to a false negative result.

"I have no expectation of beating Mo Farah and also no idea of how long it will take, I just want to complete it! The only other event I've competed in is the local "Round Glastonbury Tor" 10K. I am very happy to do my bit to raise awareness of coeliac disease and if it means that just one more person thinks that it's worth getting tested as a result then that would be fantastic!"

For more information please visit www.coeliac.org.uk

To sponsor John, please visit www.justgiving.com/fundraising/john-mitchell39

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Notes to editors:

- Coeliac UK is the national charity for people who need to live without gluten, whether due to coeliac disease or another medical condition requiring a gluten free diet.
- The charity was launched in 1968 and is celebrating its 50th Anniversary this year
- Coeliac disease is a serious illness where the body's immune system reacts to gluten found in food, making the body attack itself.
- Symptoms include diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach cramps, mouth ulcers, fatigue and anaemia.
- In undiagnosed, untreated coeliac disease there is a greater risk of complications including anaemia, osteoporosis, neurological conditions such as gluten ataxia and neuropathy, and although rare there's an increased risk of small bowel cancer and intestinal lymphoma.
- 1 in 100 people in the UK has coeliac disease
- Average time to diagnosis is 13 years.
- 1 in 4 people diagnosed with coeliac disease had previously been diagnosed with IBS.
- 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 has a Helpline on 0333 332 2033 and further information can be found at www.coeliac.org.uk