

Press release

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Coeliac UK celebrates all things gluten free 11-17 May

National charity Coeliac UK will be celebrating all things gluten free during the week of 11-17 May, bringing together its community with a variety of online activities, including a cook along with MasterChef champion, Jane Devonshire and hosting a virtual gluten free afternoon tea party to help support those that are feeling isolated and alone at this difficult time.

Hilary Croft Coeliac UK's CEO said: "Many people with coeliac disease, an autoimmune disease caused but a reaction to gluten, are not only worried about their own health conditions but also struggling with obtaining essential gluten free supplies. Like many, they are suffering with anxiety and loneliness and [Coeliac UK's Gluten Free Community Week](#) is hoping to provide much needed practical but fun support whilst celebrating a fantastic community that is rallying round and uniting through the current crisis."

Kicking off on Monday 11 May at 10am on Facebook, Coeliac UK's Ambassador Jane Devonshire will be demonstrating a gluten free recipe, which is perfect to do with kids, and ideal to make for the gluten free afternoon tea party later in the week. Jane will be launching a gluten free baking competition, which she will also be judging. The charity has recently provided additional support to the gluten free community with free access to over 1000 gluten free recipes from its [Home of Gluten Free Recipes](#) and budding bakers just need to choose one of the recipes and post a photo of their gluten free creation. Further details of how to enter and prizes see: www.coeliac.org.uk/gfcommunityweek and look out for details across social media.

Coeliac UK hopes as many people as possible will take part in their virtual gluten free afternoon tea party on Friday 15 May inviting friends, family and colleagues to enjoy a cup of tea and gluten free cake together via video chat. There will also be an opportunity for people to donate to the charity at: www.coeliac.org.uk/virtualgftea to help ensure it can survive and continue providing a much needed service to so many. The charity has seen a 500% increase in demand for its services matched with a 50% loss in income.

Other activities include an art competition, a session on recent research and joining other coeliac communities from across the globe on Saturday 16 May 2020 for International Coeliac Day, using #coeliacunited to create an international movement of gluten free communities across the globe.

Hilary Croft continued: "We usually run an awareness campaign in May, but due to the current situation surrounding Coronavirus, we decided to replace this with a week of interactive online and social media activities to help people feel more connected during this time of lockdown. So if you want to join in the fun, be part of the community and find out the facts and tips around living gluten free, Coeliac UK is the place to be."

Coeliac disease is not an allergy or an intolerance but an 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. There is no cure and no medication; the only treatment is a strict gluten free diet for life. 1 in 100 people in the UK has coeliac disease but only 30% of those with the condition have been diagnosed. There are an estimated half a million people in the UK who have the condition yet don't know it.

For more details on the week, on go to: www.coeliac.org.uk/gfcommunityweek

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For further information, please contact:

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Notes to editors:

- Coeliac UK's Gluten Free Community Week is kindly sponsored by Nature's Path.
- Coeliac disease is a serious illness where the body's immune system reacts to gluten found in food, making the body attack itself.
- 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.
- 1 in 100 people in the UK has coeliac disease but half a million people in the UK are undiagnosed.
- Average time to diagnosis is 13 years
- 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.
- 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.
- Coeliac UK has a Helpline on 0333 332 2033 and further information can be found at www.coeliac.org.uk