

"2 of 10 coeliacs are diagnosed" International Coeliac Day - 17-18, May 2008

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Association of European Coeliac Societies, AOECS, celebrates the International Coeliac Day on 17 – 18, May 2008 “2 of 10 coeliacs are diagnosed”

What is coeliac disease?

Coeliac disease is an inherited autoimmune disease, a permanent intolerance to dietary gluten.

Gluten is a protein, found in wheat, rye and barley, triticale, kamut, etc. It reacts with the small bowel lining, causing very wide range of symptoms. The correct diagnosis relies upon proving that the small bowel lining shows the typical damage but is difficult to diagnose because there are no specific symptoms. Blood tests are available for screening aid and the diagnosis of coeliac disease.

Coeliacs are sensitive to gluten lifelong, so they are never cured, even if the symptoms disappear – after removing gluten from their diet. Coeliac children and most adults return to being perfectly normal and will remain normal as long as they adhere the diet.

If coeliac disease remains untreated or the coeliac patient does not follow the strict diet, it can lead to malnutrition, anaemia, growth problems, and osteoporosis, and there is an increased risk of bowel and stomach cancer.

Coeliac disease is more often than previously thought, relatively common. Among the European population the incidence is estimated around 1:100. In the past it was regarded as a very rare childhood condition. At present a large proportion of newly diagnosed coeliacs are adults. Many of them had only few or no health problems during childhood, but develop symptoms only when adults.

Around 10 % of all first degree relatives (parents, brothers, sisters or children) of known coeliacs also have the disease.

What is glutenfree diet?

The exclusive treatment of coeliac disease is the strict glutenfree diet, lifelong.

The glutenfree diet sounds simple but it is not easy to follow. Gluten containing cereals are used as ingredients in bread, pasta, cakes, etc. The prepared and commercial foods, processed foods – unless they are made exclusively of ingredients glutenfree by nature – are often contaminated, consequently not suitable for coeliacs.

Information about gluten free diet can be obtained from doctors, healthcare professionals (doctors, dietitians, nutritionists, nurses, etc.) and coeliac societies all over in Europe.

The International Coeliac Day

The organiser of the International Coeliac Day since 2006 is the Association of European Coeliac Societies (AOECS).

Nowadays already 2 of 10 coeliacs are diagnosed. This percentage varies from country to country. With a large variety of activities and events in several countries we want to make coeliac disease better known in Europe and hope to improve the lives of coeliacs still ignoring their condition.

More information

AOECS is an independent European non-governmental umbrella organisation. AOECS was founded in 1988 in Rome in order to join the efforts in all the countries for representing the specific interests and needs of European coeliacs.

Today AOECS has 33 member-associations in 29 European countries, and takes part as partner of two medical and scientific research-projects on coeliac disease supported by EU: PreventCD and CD MEDICS .

Major improvements in the food-labelling have been achieved in the recent years allowing the coeliacs a more easy identification of food complying with the glutenfree diet.

For more information about this programs and the disease, the treatment, please contact to the Board of Directors of AO ECS:

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The Association of European Coeliac Societies (AO ECS) was founded in 1988. AO ECS is the umbrella organisation of European Coeliac Societies and is an independent non-profit association. AO ECS reviews problems of international importance, coordinates international activities and matters of common interest of the members and favours the exchange of information among the members for the benefit of Europeans affected by the coeliac condition or dermatitis herpetiformis

[You can find this press release here](#)