

News

Media Release - Gluten free fad diet impacts coeliac diagnosis

in National News
11 Mar 2016

Coeliac Australia has launched a new campaign to help increase the diagnosis of coeliac disease in Australia.

Coeliac disease is an autoimmune illness affecting one in 70 of the population. However, 80 per cent of affected Australians remain undiagnosed and unaware they are living with the condition.

Typical problems associated with coeliac disease include gastrointestinal complaints, anaemia and nutrient deficiencies, chronic fatigue and headaches. If the disease is left untreated, it can cause chronic ill health and lead to liver disease, osteoporosis, other autoimmune illnesses and cancer.

Dr Jason Tye-Din, gastroenterologist and Chair of the Medical Advisory Committee of Coeliac Australia, said the rise in popularity of the gluten free diet had important medical implications for the diagnosis of coeliac disease.

"Millions of Australians are removing gluten from their diet and this makes diagnosis challenging as the accuracy of testing depends on active gluten consumption.

"Coeliac disease is a serious medical illness, not a dietary fad. It is important to speak to your GP about being tested for coeliac disease, before starting a gluten free diet."

The new Consider Coeliac Disease campaign launched during Coeliac Awareness Week, 13-20 March aims to raise the profile of coeliac disease with GPs and promote awareness of symptoms and best practice screening and management.

Coeliac Australia president, Tom McLeod, said: "We need to raise awareness of coeliac disease with GPs and the broader community so the 270,000 Australians still waiting for a diagnosis can receive the help they need.

"Early medical diagnosis is the first critical step towards improving health and wellbeing."

Targeted testing by GPs of people who have at-risk symptoms or medical history is the best way to identify those with coeliac disease.

Family members of people with coeliac disease have an elevated risk of testing positive for the disease, with a one in 10 chance that first degree relatives will also have coeliac disease.

Coeliac Australia has developed new online resources to support health professionals in the diagnosis of coeliac disease, including a video Diagnosing Coeliac Disease – A Brief Guide for GPs and GP Fact Sheet, which are available on its website www.coeliac.org.au/resources

Coeliac Disease Quick Facts:

Coeliac disease is an immune-based illness caused by gluten, a dietary protein from wheat, rye, barley and oats. Treatment involves a strict and lifelong gluten free diet.

People with coeliac disease may experience a variety of symptoms, including abdominal pain, bloating, flatulence, diarrhoea or constipation, nausea or vomiting, fatigue or rashes. However, an absence of these symptoms is also possible.

Associated conditions seen with coeliac disease are not always considered as related – such as dental enamel defects, mouth ulcers, alopecia, osteoporosis, unexplained weight loss, abnormal liver function results, ataxia, pregnancy complications and neurological symptoms.

Coeliac disease remains one of the most underdiagnosed conditions in this country - affecting 1 in 80 men and 1 in 60 women.

Testing rates are particularly low among men – representing only a 1/3 of those who are tested for coeliac disease.

For many people with coeliac disease, even those exhibiting symptoms, it can take 10 or more years before they are tested.

In the long term, if left untreated, this condition can create issues with fertility, osteoporosis and even some cancers.

Appropriate diagnosis and management can reverse symptoms, reduce risks of long-term complications and improve overall quality of life.

Contact: Sally Tobin 0479 181 316

Dr Tye-Din and Patient case studies are available for interview.

For more information about Coeliac Awareness Week 2016

Visit Coeliac Australia online at www.coeliac.org.au/caw

Or contact us on: 1300 GLUTEN (1300 458 836)

About Coeliac Australia

Coeliac Australia is a national not-for-profit body supporting people with coeliac disease. Coeliac Australia has around 20,000 members and provides a range of support and information services to make living with coeliac disease easier. The organisation also seeks to raise vital funds to support research and is dedicated to raising awareness of coeliac disease and the gluten free diet within the medical profession, the food and hospitality industry and the general public.

Tweet

Like 0

404.

 Share

