

International Coeliac Day Saturday 16 May 2020

Calling everyone to join together to embrace coeliac disease and increase awareness:

1 to 2 in every 100 people across Europe are estimated to have coeliac disease an autoimmune disease caused by a reaction to gluten which is a protein found in wheat, barley, and rye.

It can therefore be assumed, that more than 7 million people are affected by coeliac disease across Europe, with only approximately 25%* of those currently medically diagnosed.

Coeliac disease can be present with a wide range of mild to very severe symptoms, including bloating, diarrhoea, nausea, wind, constipation, tiredness, mouth ulcers, sudden or unexpected weight loss (but not in all cases), and anaemia, with the only treatment being a strict daily gluten-free diet for life. If left untreated, coeliac disease can lead to a number of serious complications later in life, including anaemia, osteoporosis, unexplained infertility, neurological conditions such as gluten ataxia and neuropathy and, although rare, there is an increased risk of small bowel cancer and intestinal lymphoma.

Coeliac disease can be diagnosed in both men and women, from weaning, to later in life in all countries. What unites AOECS members is the same treatment – a safe gluten free diet and lifestyle that coeliac patients must adhere to.

No matter where they live, the challenges remain the same:

- How to get a correct diagnosis as early as possible?
- How to manage the ongoing COVID-19 crisis as a chronically ill person, having coeliac disease?
- How to get safe gluten free food from shops or when eating outside home?
- How to provide children and elderly people safe gluten free and nutritional valued food in the education and social care institutions?
- How to support coeliac patients and their families better psychologically and financially?
- How to raise the awareness of the coeliac disease and what it means living with it?

International Coeliac Day 2020, takes place on Saturday 16 May with a collective moment shared across online communities, putting people and support at the forefront of social media activity by using the hashtags **#coeliacunited** or **#celiacunited**.

“The global coeliac community is more important than ever. A worldwide group of people living with a common cause. Together we can raise the awareness, together we become stronger!

We call for all those with coeliac disease, to join their national coeliac societies and support their activity, because they are the voice, which can be heard by authorities, food producers, retailers, caterers and healthcare professionals. By working with them, we will see real change that benefits our communities.” says Tunde Koltai, Chairperson of AOECS.

Association of European Coeliac Societies founded in 1988 is an independent, non-profit umbrella organization of national coeliac societies. It currently has 36 members from Europe, and associate members from Israel, the US and Jordan, representing patients with coeliac disease and related conditions. The membership of a national coeliac society has direct impact on coeliac patients' wellbeing including the provision of advice and information, events, access to safe food, research all helping to increase the awareness of the coeliac disease among the general public and healthcare professionals.

If you are interested in coeliac organisation activity in your country, please click [HERE](#).

*diagnosis rates are different in each country

If you need more information, please contact to AOECS Board: theboard@aoecs.org

www.aoecs.org

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Stay Well, Stay United – from all of us at AOECS