



Coeliac Society Ireland welcomes publication of new ICGP guidelines for the diagnosis and care of Coeliac Disease sufferers

- **50 clinical indicators identified**
- **70% of those affected currently undiagnosed**
- **Untreated long-term issues can include malnutrition, infertility and cancer**
- **Guidelines hailed as most significant in 50 years.**

The Coeliac Society and the Irish College of General Practitioners have published a set of guidelines entitled the “Diagnosis and Management of Adult Coeliac Disease” for use within the context of the Irish healthcare system. It puts in place a framework for the early identification and treatment of patients with coeliac disease in primary healthcare.

For the first time, this guide outlines 50 different indicators that are identified as the Clinical presentation of coeliac disease for GPs and health practitioners. Included amongst them are conditions such as osteoporosis, anaemia, mouth ulcers, heartburn, diarrhoea, constipation and infertility.

It is estimated that there are 400,000 people in Ireland who suffer from gluten intolerance. An estimated 50,000 of these will suffer from lifelong autoimmune Coeliac Disease for which there is no cure and which poses significant health risks if left unchecked.

Gill Brennan, CEO, Coeliac Society Ireland said: “This document is one of the most significant pieces of work addressing the issues of coeliac disease in many years, given that the importance of an early diagnosis cannot be underestimated.

“We know that over 70% of current sufferers are undiagnosed. There is no cure and if left untreated, as is currently the case for many sufferers, it can result in a range of significant health risks including cancer and infertility.”

According to the Coeliac Society another important aspect contained in the new guidelines is the inclusion of a clear long-term care plan. Currently the only treatment is a strict lifelong

adherence to a gluten-free diet. Studies have shown that dietary compliance is often poor if not followed up by those caring for the patient.

Richelle Flanagan, contributing author and board member of the Coeliac Society of Ireland said: “When adopted these guidelines will prevent needless delays in diagnosis while also providing medical practitioners with a clear treatment path to follow.

“The guidelines acknowledge that the only treatment for the disease is a strict lifelong adherence to a gluten free diet and that dietary compliance without continuing support is often poor. As a result, sufferers may present later with long-term health issues placing a further - and wholly preventable - burden on our health system.”

The **Diagnosis and Management of Adult Coeliac Disease guidelines as presented by the Quality and Safety in Practice Committee** are available to view on www.icgp.ie or www.coeliac.ie

ENDS

For further information, images or to arrange an interview, please contact:

Richard Burke | 4TC | 01 288 0636 (home number) / Mobile +353 (0) 86 8167822 | richard@4tc.ie

Craig McKechnie | 4TC | +353 (0) 876218839 | craig@4TC.ie |

Available for interview

- Gill Brennan, chief executive of the Coeliac Society of Ireland
- *Contributing Author, Ms Richelle Flanagan, Board member and Chair of the Clinical Advisory Group of the Coeliac Society of Ireland.*
- Sarah Keogh, Coeliac Society nutritionist and dietitian (MSc. BSc. Dip. MINDI)

[Full Guidelines available by clicking here](#)

Notes for the editor

- Coeliac disease is an auto-immune disease where the affected individual reacts abnormally when gluten is ingested. The intestine becomes inflamed and damaged resulting in poor absorption of essential nutrients. Gluten is a protein found in many foods including bread, pasta, gravy, soy sauce and beer.
- There is no cure for coeliac disease and the only treatment is a gluten-free diet. Annual medical check-ups are also advised.
- Symptoms include abdominal pain, recurring mouth-ulcers, weight-loss, vomiting and diarrhoea. If untreated, coeliac disease can affect fertility and lead to other health conditions such as osteoporosis.
- The first step to receiving a diagnosis is to visit your GP for a simple blood test. It is important to be on a gluten containing diet before testing. Eliminating gluten before testing could lead to a false negative test result. If the test is positive you will be referred to a

gastroenterologist for an endoscopy. Once diagnosed, it is advised you visit a dietician to ensure optimum nutrition.

- According to Bord Bia research, 20% of Irish people shop for gluten free food regularly, with the retail market valued at €66m and experiencing double digit growth each year.

List of way that the disease may present itself as described in guidelines

Clinical presentation of coeliac disease

Gastrointestinal symptoms due to malabsorption

- Diarrhoea
- Steatorrhoea
- Abdominal cramps
- Abdominal bloating and distension
- Borborygmi
- Excessive flatulence
- Weight loss in some but patients may also be overweight or obese

Gastrointestinal symptoms due to dysmotility

- Heartburn
- Regurgitation
- Dysphagia
- Vomiting
- Epigastric pain
- Constipation

Haematological I

- Iron/B12/folate deficiency
- Anaemia
- Thrombocytopenia
- Thrombocytosis
- Thromboembolism
- Leukopenia/neutropenia
- Vitamin K malabsorption leading to coagulopathy
- Hyposplenism
- IgA deficiency
- Lymphoma

Hepatological

- Hypertransaminasaemia

Skin

- Pruritis
- Dermatitis herpetiformis
- Alopecia

Oral

- Aphthous mouth ulcers
- Glossodynia
- Defective tooth enamel

Rheumatological

- Arthralgia

Bone

- Osteopenia
- Osteoporosis
- Osteomalacia

Gynaecological ¹⁴

- Late menarche

- Early menopause
- Infertility and subfertility
- Recurrent miscarriage/adverse pregnancy outcomes

Neurological

- Ataxia
- Partial seizures
- Migraine
- Peripheral neuropathy

Psychological

- Depression
- Chronic fatigue
- 'Muzzy head'

Other

- Faltering growth
- Type 1 diabetes mellitus at diagnosis
- Autoimmune thyroid disease at diagnosis
- Other autoimmune diseases
- Trisomy 21
- Turner syndrome