



Nicola Crawford Taylor - Coeliac UK Membership Helpline Dietitian

A COELIAC UK MEMBERSHIP HELPLINE DIETITIAN



My working week starts on a Wednesday and always with breakfast, usually porridge or a bowl of yoghurt and homemade granola and the essential cup of tea. I then drop my two young children at nursery before heading to work for the day.

I work part-time, three days a week, so the first part of my day is spent catching up with colleagues and checking and responding to emails to ensure that I'm fully up to date with current events and procedures.

Today, my first task is to check final proofs of two articles for our summer issue of *Crossed Grain* magazine, which is sent out to all Members three times a year. The articles cover travel insurance, soya lecithin and the new Government guidelines on alcohol, as well as a number of recipes all with a Mediterranean flavour.

A large proportion of my day is spent answering enquiries via the Coeliac UK Helpline, email or social media. Enquiries are varied and no two days are the same. Today on the Helpline, I have been

asked about the link between coeliac disease and Type 1 diabetes; how much gluten needs to be eaten prior to testing for coeliac disease; if maize starch is gluten-free; can rye bread be eaten; what foods are available on prescription and whether fatigue is a symptom of coeliac disease. Not having face-to-face contact with people means having to build a rapport over the telephone fairly quickly to ensure that they feel comfortable talking about issues and symptoms that are sometimes quite personal. Active listening is a skill that I have really

developed during my time here and it is something that the Helpline team are committed to, it is only through actively listening to someone that we are best able to support them.

11:30-12:30 and it is time for our bi-monthly social media chat. This is an hour-long chat held every other month where the dietitians take over the handling of Coeliac UK's social media channels and give people the opportunity to contact us directly. It is a busy hour, with lots of enquiries about a variety of topics, including iron deficiency anaemia and good sources of iron that are suitable for a gluten-free diet, ongoing symptoms despite following a gluten-free diet for almost a year and gluten-free options when travelling to South-East Asia. I love the fast-paced nature of this and it is an area in which we hope to develop our services in the future.

This morning, I have also handled a number of email enquiries regarding diagnosis, the conditions that are associated with coeliac disease, liver function tests, if there is a link between coeliac disease and tooth enamel defects and a low residue diet.

13.30 and it's time for lunch, a puy lentil and feta salad, followed by a quick walk around the block to get some fresh air before I begin the second part of my day. First up is our team meeting. The Helpline team consists of seven staff, two dietitians, three food and drink advisors and two membership advisors, and between us we handle an average

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*Coeliac Awareness
Week 2016
9th-15th May*

Coeliac UK is the oldest and largest coeliac disease charity in the world and we have been working for people with coeliac disease and dermatitis herpetiformis since 1968.

of 2,500 enquiries a month. Operating Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm, the Helpline is one of the key services offered by Coeliac UK and provides support to a wide range of individuals, including people who are newly diagnosed with coeliac disease, those seeking a diagnosis, healthcare professionals and established Members who have been diagnosed for many years. It is often the first point of contact that people have with the Charity and gives callers invaluable advice on gluten-free living from recipe ideas to information on labelling. We meet on a regular basis, away from the phones, to ensure that we have dedicated time to discuss any issues and catch up on any organisational news and events. Today's meeting is focused on identifying a better way in which we can monitor and record the enquiries we receive via the Helpline to enable us to improve the services and resources we offer.

The remainder of the afternoon, interspersed with answering Helpline enquiries, is spent updating the information on the website about following a gluten-free diet when you are on a budget. With over a quarter of Clinical Commissioning Groups in England now restricting, or withdrawing, access to gluten-free staple foods for people with coeliac disease, the aim is to provide more support for those who are struggling to follow a gluten-free diet now that their prescriptions have been withdrawn, and to provide some useful tips for those who may be on a tight budget.

As you can see, the day is varied, which I love. I never know what the next enquiry will be, so whilst I specialise in coeliac disease and the gluten-free diet, continuing professional development is so important too. I really enjoy speaking to a range of people, whatever stage of their journey, knowing that the help and support we provide can really make a difference.

Did you know? Coeliac UK offers free Membership to all HCPs. Benefits include a copy of our *Food and Drink Directory* which lists over 18,000 foods that are suitable for a gluten-free diet (a useful tool to show patients when you see them in clinic); access to the latest research findings into coeliac disease and the gluten-free diet; our quarterly professional email newsletter and an online forum where you can share best practice and information with other HCP Members. If you are not yet a Member, visit our website www.coeliac.org.uk/join-us/hcp/ or contact the Helpline on 0333 332 2033 to join today.

Coeliac UK is the oldest and largest coeliac disease charity in the world and we have been working for people with coeliac disease and dermatitis herpetiformis since 1968. We have offices in England, Scotland and Wales. Together, as the biggest UK community for coeliac disease, we will improve healthcare and make a gluten-free choice an easy choice.

Don't forget: Awareness Week 2016 - Is it coeliac disease? From 9th to 15th May.

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AWARENESS WEEK / 9-15 MAY