

COELIAC UK'S STATEMENT ON SELF-TESTING KITS FOR COELIAC DISEASE

Current status

Self-testing kits, marketed under the brand name Biocard and made available in the UK by JRBiomedical, will soon be available over the counter. Using a pin-prick to obtain a finger-tip blood sample, they identify the antibodies present in coeliac disease. They are easy to use and are intended for home use.

Coeliac UK position

There is a serious problem with under diagnosis of coeliac disease and it is estimated that 4 out of 5 people with the condition have not been diagnosed – that amounts to nearly 500,000 people in the UK.

Self-testing kits may be a welcome tool in helping such people on their journey to a full diagnosis. There are a number of issues that should be considered by anyone thinking of using the kit:

- while the kit is as accurate as the blood tests used by GPs, there will be a small number of results that are not accurate and provide a false negative result. For this reason it is important that anyone who has had a negative result, but has ongoing symptoms or concerns should see their GP. A GP will be able to assess the full range of symptoms and may decide to investigate further for coeliac disease, regardless of the blood test result.
- if the test is used on anyone who has already reduced, or cut out gluten altogether, from their diet, the test is unlikely to show the presence of coeliac disease.
- anyone who has a positive test result should seek advice from a GP as soon as possible. Your GP may carry out further blood tests at the local laboratory to check your self-test results. We recommend that people with positive blood tests should undergo endoscopy and/or biopsy to confirm the diagnosis. These may only be carried out by doctors or surgeons. Again, it is essential that people do not go on a gluten-free diet until a proper diagnosis is made. Removing gluten is highly likely to hinder the diagnosis.
- visiting a GP and obtaining a full medical diagnosis, will ensure that any problems associated with coeliac disease, such as osteoporosis and anaemia, are properly identified and treated. In addition, a patient will be able to access advice from a dietitian about avoiding gluten in their diet and be able to receive prescriptions for specialist gluten-free foods which will help them manage their new diet.

Coeliac UK publishes a full symptoms leaflet which is in line with the British Society of Gastroenterology recommendations on diagnosis and is available to the public through our website www.coeliac.org.uk or by contacting our helpline 0870 444 8804