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Page 1 of 1

# Coeliac lifestyle easier

By ERICA DONALD

After six years of illness and five miscarriages, Dannielle Walker has a new lease on life.

The 26-year-old Gulf Harbour resident was relieved when she learned of her coeliac disease diagnosis in February 2014.

At the time she was struggling to adjust to her new gluten free lifestyle and lived in constant fear of cross-contamination as even a trace of gluten could leave her bedridden for days.

Speaking out for Coeliac Awareness Week from May 18-24, Walker says she is much happier.

"I was quite depressed at first because you grow up eating all this food then suddenly you can't have it," she says.

"I'm still learning and still scanning labels but it gets a lot easier and you get a lot happier."

The proof is in Walker's four-month-old baby Alyssa.

"I didn't think it would happen," Walker says. "I never thought I would be able to have another baby without help, but it was awesome and so easy."

As well as the miscarriages before her diagnosis, Walker's four-

## ► WHAT IS IT?

Coeliac disease is a permanent, autoimmune disorder caused by an intolerance to gluten. This intolerance causes the body to produce antibodies which damage the lining of the small bowel and make it impossible for the body to absorb vitamins, minerals and other nutrients from food.

It is hereditary, and both genetic and environmental factors play important roles in coeliac disease.

year-old daughter Sophie was born prematurely, something Walker attributes to eating gluten before she knew she was coeliac.

She is looking forward to her future as she wants to help those living with coeliac disease.

"I'm passionate about it. It's something I deal with daily, I'm familiar with it so I want to be able to help people."

Walker encourages anyone who may be concerned to get tested.

"It saves a lot of heartache."

It's easier than ever to get tested as Green Cross Health have made it possible to get



Dannielle Walker with daughters Alyssa and Sophie enjoy a gluten free lifestyle now.

screened for coeliac disease at Unichem or Life pharmacies.

The new screening test is available without an appointment, Green Cross Health professional services head Alison Van Wyk says.

"Your pharmacist will take you through a questionnaire to ensure the test is right for you."

The test is completed in about 10 minutes and, with the consumer's consent their doctor is told the result.

About one in 100 people in New Zealand suffer from coeliac disease.