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Twins raise coeliac disease awareness

DANICA MACLEAN

Amaya and Tamsin Jordan want to open a gluten-free fish and chip when they are older.

The 12-year-old twins have coeliac disease which means they can't eat anything with gluten in it.

Coeliac disease is a lifelong auto-immune disorder which damages the gut lining and its ability to absorb nutrients.

"It's annoying because they don't have any gluten-free fish and chips," Tamsin says.

They have visited a gluten-free fish and chip shop in Auckland and the pair believe one would go well in Northland. Around five years ago, the girls were experiencing bad stomach pains.

"We would be screaming in pain," Amaya says.

Amaya was the first to be diagnosed and mum Antoinette says when a person is confirmed, the whole family gets tested.

The test returned a positive result for Tamsin too.

Since then they've changed their diet and they no longer suffer with really bad stomach pains.

Antoinette says the twins are really good about what they eat and politely say "no thank you" when offered foods they can't eat.

"I'm really strict. I don't give them anything with traces or made in a factory which uses gluten."

That means gluten-free bread only, no milo, no pasta or raro.

She says gluten is in a lot of things you would never think about.

"It's really hard, soya sauce has gluten in it."

Antoinette says shared lunches are a real challenge.

"Sometimes it's easier to send them with their own food."

She says cross-contamination is still enough to make them sick.

"I don't think people under-

stand that the consequences if they use one spoon for that and then use it to stir this."

The twins would like to make people more aware and understanding of coeliac disease. There are 65,000 New Zealanders who have it and it can cause stomach pain, diarrhoea, constipation, nausea, vomiting and joint pain.

Coeliac New Zealand says 80 per cent of people don't know they have the condition.

Coeliac Awareness Week ran from May 16 to 22, but there are two events in Whangarei on May 28.

■ For more information go to <http://www.coeliac.org.nz/get-involved/coeliac-awareness-week-events>



Kamo Intermediate School year 8 students Amaya and Tamsin Jordan have to be careful what they eat because they have coeliac disease.