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## WHAT IS COELIAC DISEASE (CD)?

CD is a condition which occurs when people become sensitive to a protein called gluten in their diet. Gluten is found in wheat and other cereals and is normally a harmless part of the food we eat. However, if you have coeliac disease, gluten damages the lining of the small intestine causing problems with the absorption of nutrients and vitamins. Coeliac disease can be diagnosed at any age, from infancy to old age, but it is most seen in children and young adults. The treatment, which is usually very successful, is to remove all sources of gluten from the diet. It is estimated that the disease affects about 1 in 100 individuals; however, in most cases, it is misdiagnosed.

## THE ITAMA PROJECT

ITAMA is a multidisciplinary project, part financed by the Interreg Italia Malta programme. The aim of the project is to verify the effectiveness of less invasive testing methods to diagnose CD especially in children of paediatric age. For this reason, one of the main activities of the project will be to screen 20,000 children in primary and middle schools of Malta against CD. The project was launched in Malta in January 2019, followed by an awareness campaign for school management teams. The project was very welcome by all the schools we visited and all of them collaborated with us, as they recognised the benefit their students would obtain! The first few months of the project were dedicated to the planning, the development of the necessary tools, procurement of tests and of resources.

## ITAMA PROJECT TESTING PHASE IN SCHOOLS RETURNS

The students and their families were informed of the project from December 2019 onwards whereby information leaflets and consent forms were sent to all the students through the participating schools. The response was very good and testing started in March 2020, until COVID-19 happened! The fulcrum of the ITAMA project is the testing phase. The data collected from these tests is the basis of the study that is being undertaken as part of this project. Now that schools are open again, the ITAMA team started rolling the ball again. We have updated our testing protocol as instructed by the Health Authority with respect to COVID-19 mitigation measures. Your children's health is our priority, so please rest assured that they will be taken care of adequately. We are visiting schools and testing students since the 16th November and have accomplished over 5,000 tests so far. We will continue doing tests in the coming weeks/months until we achieve our target of 20,000 tests.



## COVID-19 CRISIS – ITAMA’S BIT FOR THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

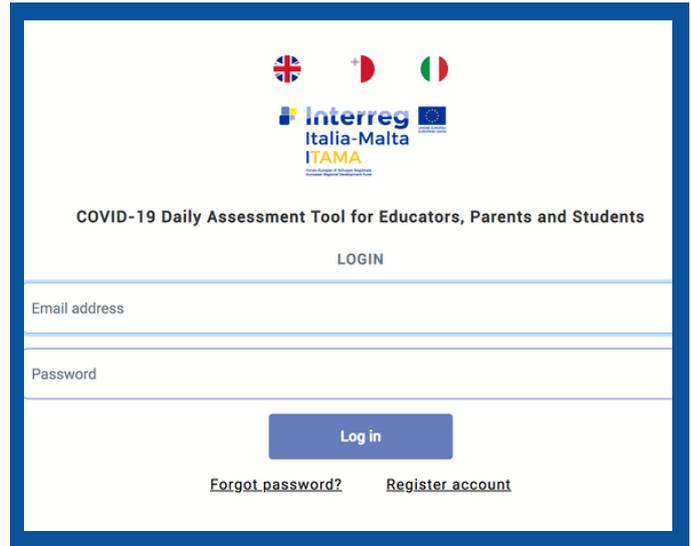
Although COVID-19 brought our testing to a halt, it didn't stop us from supporting the school community! On the contrary, it pushed us to think of developing new tools to reduce contamination within the schools. In fact, in the last few weeks, we have been working on a web application to assess students' health and an eLearning platform to educate users about COVID-19. Both tools will be available in 3 languages: Maltese, English, Italian and they will be accessible to anyone with an internet connection on computers, tablets and mobile phones. The tools will be made available in 3 steps.



## STEP ONE

We are happy to announce that the COVID-19 Daily Assessment Application is ready to launch and you may access it by following this link: <https://covid.itamaproject.eu>

The aim of this tool is to support parents, educators and students to understand whether they are fit to attend school or not by doing a daily assessment of their conditions. To avail yourself of the app, just register for a free account and choose your correct profile. Once your profile is setup including the names of your children/students, you may start using the tool daily.



## STEP TWO

We are currently developing an eLearning platform, which will consist of 7 different modules, and serve as a guide on the symptoms, the transmission, the prevention and the behaviour in the presence of COVID-19.

- What is COVID-19
- Facts and Myths of COVID-19
- How to Break the Transmission Chains
- What should I do if I get infected with COVID-19?
- The Swab test
- Where to get help
- Useful sources of Information

Every module will end with a short quiz to help the users confirm their level of understanding. The platform will also contain a video repository with videos related to COVID-19. Registration for the eLearning will be free of charge and available for everyone.

## STEP THREE

Once the online learning platform is launched, we shall proceed with upgrading the assessment tool with some new added functions so stay tuned because we ain't done yet!!!

**Follow closely our social media accounts and our website's News section as we will soon give you more news about the online platform!**

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