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Indian scientists launch indigenous diagnostic kit for celiac disease 1

ONE ADVANTAGE IS THAT THE TEST DOES NOT REQUIRE A SOPHISTICATED LABORATORY AND HIGHLY SKILLED PERSONNEL JITENDRA SINGH, Union science and technology minister

NEW DELHI: Union science and technology minister Jitendra Singh launched India's first indigenous kit for diagnosing celiac disease on Tuesday, giving a boost to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Make in India slogan and marking an important step in fighting the little-known ailment.

Celiac damages the inner lining of a person's small intestine, affecting his ability to absorb food and causes weight loss, diarrhoea, abdominal fullness and anaemia. Correct diagnosis is essential as it could lead to long-term complications like diabetes, thyroid, osteoporosis and malignancies and treatment requires lifelong adherence to a gluten-free diet. Most diagnostic kits that are currently available are imported from Europe and the US and cost up to ` 500. The indigenous kit could bring the price to around ` 100.

"One advantage is that the test does not require sophisticated laboratory and highly skilled personnel," the minister said at the launch. "This would be especially useful in rural areas."

Experts say nearly 1% of the population in north India could be affected by this disease, although most remain undiagnosed.

The kit consists of two tests. While one is based on longer indirect Elisa that can only be done by a medical professional, the other is a simpler point-of-care test that one can perform at home and will show results in 20 minutes.

The new kit was the result of a collaboration between Translational Health Science and Technology Institute, Gurgaon, International Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, AIIMS, and diagnostic kit manufacturers J Mitra & Co.