

Position statement: Prescribing Gluten-Free Products

Summary

In line with NHS England's guidance on prescribing of Gluten Free foods (Dec 2018) NHS South West London supports the prescribing of gluten-free (GF) preparations to GF bread and GF mixes only. Prescribing should only be undertaken for individuals diagnosed with gluten-sensitivity enteropathies including coeliac disease and dermatitis herpetiformis.

GF foods from outside these categories (biscuits, cereals, cooking aids, grains, flours, and pasta) have been removed from [Part XV \(Borderline Substances\) of the Drug Tariff](#) and their supply on NHS is no longer supported and NHS prescriptions should not be issued for these products in any circumstances.

Rationale

GF foods are tolerated by people suffering from established gluten-sensitive enteropathies, which include coeliac disease. When someone has coeliac disease, their small intestine becomes inflamed if they eat food containing gluten. This reaction to gluten makes it difficult for them to digest food and nutrients.

Staple GF foods have been available on prescription to patients diagnosed with gluten-sensitivity enteropathies since the late 1960s when the availability of GF foods was limited. GF foods are now readily available in supermarkets and a wider range of naturally GF food types are available, meaning that the ability of patients to obtain these foods without a prescription has greatly increased.

Recommendations

Revised NHS England guidance published in 2018 allows for the prescribing of GF bread and mixes only to be prescribed at NHS expense. The national guidance does not include recommendations on the quantities of gluten-free staples to prescribe but [Coeliac UK](#) has produced a useful guide on the recommended monthly allocation of GF bread and mixes units in England based on age, gender and whether an individual is pregnant or breastfeeding. This guide can be used in conjunction with an assessment of the patient's clinical need when calculating quantities to provide on prescription.

Guidance for clinicians

- Ensure that people newly diagnosed with coeliac disease discuss how to follow a gluten-free diet with a healthcare professional with specialist knowledge of coeliac disease, such as a dietitian.
- Gluten-free foods except for GF bread and GF mixes **should not** be prescribed on the NHS.
- GF bread and mixes are only to be prescribed for individuals with a confirmed diagnosis of **coeliac disease** (SNOMED CT code: 396331005) or **dermatitis herpetiformis** (SNOMED CT code: 111196000).
- Review all patients currently prescribed GF products on the NHS and discontinue the prescription if
 - The product that has been removed from the Drug Tariff.
 - They do not meet the criteria to have GF foods prescribed on the NHS.

- If discontinuing an NHS prescription for a GF preparation, explain why and advise that if the patient wishes to do so they are able to continue by purchasing additional GF preparations.
- Advise people with coeliac disease (and their family members or carers, where appropriate) that they may need to take specific supplements such as calcium or vitamin D if their dietary intake is insufficient and that they should seek advice from a member of their healthcare team before purchasing over the counter vitamin or mineral supplements.
- Offer an annual review to people with coeliac disease, including those discharged from secondary care, and encourage them to attend by giving them information about why they may need a review.

Guidance for patients, carers, and guardians

- Lots of foods are naturally gluten-free and can still be enjoyed on a gluten-free diet, further information on how to live gluten-free can be found on [Coeliac UK](#)
- People with coeliac disease (and their family members or carers, where appropriate) are to seek advice from a member of their healthcare team thinking about taking over-the-counter vitamin or mineral supplements.
- People with coeliac disease (and their family members or carers, where appropriate) may need to take specific supplements such as calcium or vitamin D if their dietary intake is insufficient.
- People with coeliac disease (and their family members or carers, where appropriate) can choose to include gluten-free oats in their diet at any stage and will be advised whether to continue eating gluten-free oats depending on their immunological, clinical, or histological response.
- The NHS belongs to you, use it responsibly.

References

- [Prescribing-gluten-free-foods-primary-care-guidance-for-ccgs.pdf \(england.nhs.uk\)](#)
- [Update information | Coeliac disease | Quality standards | NICE](#)
- [Recommendations | Coeliac disease: recognition, assessment, and management | Guidance | NICE](#)
- [How much should be prescribed? - Coeliac UK](#)

Document History

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