

# CHANGES TO THE PRESCRIBING OF GLUTEN FREE FOODS

Earlier in 2014, NHS Nottingham North and East Clinical Commissioning Cabinet decided on a new policy for gluten free prescribing. This document details what this is and what it will mean for local patients with coeliac disease.

Nottingham North and East CCG will continue to provide gluten free products on NHS prescriptions for people living with Coeliac disease in the Nottingham North and East area.

The Clinical Cabinet, which is made up of GPs from all local practices, agreed that the prescribing of gluten free food for all patients with a clinical diagnosis of coeliac disease or Dermatitis Herpetiformis will be limited to eight units (with extra provision for pregnancy and breastfeeding) and to the range of products below.

## What can be prescribed?

Prescribing of Gluten Free products should ONLY be for patients diagnosed with Coeliac disease or with Dermatitis Herpetiformis. (add ref ACBS)

- Bread; Either fresh or long-life bread may be prescribed depending on patient preference.
- Flour; Plain or self-raising flour may be prescribed.
- 8 units of bread and/or flour only each month for all patients
  - (1 unit of bread=400g, 2 units of flour=500g).
- Add 1 unit per month if in third trimester of pregnancy.
- Add 4 units per month if mother is breastfeeding.

Only products approved as Borderline Substances by ACBS may be prescribed.

The policy will be reviewed in Autumn 2015. If you have any comments about the changes then please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison (PALs) team on 0800 028 3693 or email: [pals.south@nottinghamnortheastccg.nhs.uk](mailto:pals.south@nottinghamnortheastccg.nhs.uk) See overleaf for FAQs and PALS information.

## Gluten Free Foods Q and As

### **Why have you stopped prescribing some gluten free foods?**

Demand for NHS services continues to increase. Therefore we need to look at everything we do to ensure the NHS locally uses its funding appropriately and fairly.

A wide range of gluten free products are now available in supermarkets so access to them is not a problem for most patients, and the vast majority of foods are naturally gluten free.

The NHS does not prescribe foods for diabetics or those suffering from other allergies, such as nut or egg allergies: However, having looked at the prices of gluten free foods we do recognise that some specialist gluten free products cost more than gluten-containing versions. We have looked at ways in which we can manage the financial pressure.

### **Why allow just bread and flour?**

The decision was taken to fund bread as it is considered to be a staple food in the UK. The addition of flour also means that people have the ability to make other foods should they wish to do so.

Commercially produced gluten free products are not required at every meal. There are various alternative foods which are naturally gluten free such as potatoes, rice and some noodles. Gluten free pasta is also available from supermarkets at a reasonable cost.

Fresh bread products can only be ordered from wholesalers in multiples of 8 at a time. To avoid wastage we do ask that you have access to a freezer. The bread will remain fresh for 5-8 days from the day the pharmacist receives it so please collect promptly. We recommend that 1-2 packs are consumed as fresh and the remainder are placed in the freezer on the day that you take them home. They can simply be defrosted at room temperature and consumed as fresh. The addition of flour allows people to make most other foods should they wish.

### **Why limit prescribing to 8 units for everyone?**

A wide range of gluten free products are now available in supermarkets although these may be more expensive than the gluten containing items. By allowing 8 units each month we are recognising the possible increased expenditure faced by patients. Additional units are allowed for breastfeeding mothers and women in the third trimester of pregnancy.

### **Why can't I get my Gluten Free bread from the supermarket on prescription?**

Only pharmacies (or, for eligible patients, dispensing doctors' practices) are able to dispense NHS prescriptions. Gluten Free products can only be prescribed for patients with specific, identified conditions, as part of their management. Pharmacies are able to check that the products are still suitable for you, and provide any additional advice you require.

### **Why are you not prescribing biscuits and cakes?**

Biscuits and Cakes are not usually recommended as part of a healthy diet other than as occasional treats.

### **Why are you not prescribing all-purpose/general purpose mix or bread mix?**

All-purpose/general purpose mixes and bread mixes cost a lot more than the flour products. The difference between multi-purpose mix or bread mix and flour is that they contain sugar and milk powder. Whilst these pre-mixed products may be more convenient, flour can be used to make bread as well as other items and is therefore better value.

### **The products I have received previously are only available on prescription, what can I do?**

All gluten free foods can be purchased from a pharmacy or supermarket or ordered direct from the manufacturer. There is no restriction which requires a prescription for a gluten free product. There is no expectation of 'better quality' when a gluten free food is prescribed rather than bought.

Patients may find it convenient and cost-effective to purchase items on-line and have them delivered or to ask their Pharmacy or supermarket to order the products for them.

### **This recommendation restricts patient choice, how will I ensure I maintain a healthy diet for my condition?**

Patients are free to purchase products as they choose based on preference and consumption and the additional cost is supplemented by the staple items provided by an NHS prescription. The higher price charged to the NHS by suppliers compared to supermarket prices may actually be holding prices artificially high. By removing this distorting factor the market for gluten free foods should be more attractive for manufacturers to produce suitable products at competitive prices.

NHS Choices website has information about diet choices for people living with Coeliac disease - [www.nhs.uk/conditions/coeliac-disease](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coeliac-disease)

### **What is the cost of gluten free products to the NHS?**

From April 2013 to March 2014, NHS Nottingham North & East CCG has spent £130,000 on gluten-free foods. It is anticipated that by restricting prescribing to gluten-free bread and flour the CCG can save around £40,000 per year, which can then be used to fund other healthcare. We would expect further savings to be made in regards to the quantities prescribed but are unable to estimate this.

### **Are there other ways in which the NHS could save money?**

We are constantly looking for ways to save money without impacting on patient care. This means that we have to look at how we can do things differently.

### **How can I give my opinions about this change in policy?**

We always want to hear what patients think, whether that is positive or negative, and it will help our review of this policy. You can register your opinions by contacting our Patient Advice and Liaison service - see the information overleaf.

#### **Useful links**

- [www.nhs.uk/conditions/coeliac-disease](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coeliac-disease)
- [www.coeliac.org.uk](http://www.coeliac.org.uk)
- [www.bbc.co.uk/food/diets/gluten\\_free](http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/diets/gluten_free)
- [www.coeliacmap.com/](http://www.coeliacmap.com/)

## The Patient Advice and Liaison Service

The Nottinghamshire County Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) provides information and advice on local NHS services for patients, their families and carers and is often the first point of contact for residents who live in the Nottinghamshire County area.

### Contact PALS

PALS can be contacted by either calling **0800 028 3693**  
email [pals.south@nottinghamnortheastccg.nhs.uk](mailto:pals.south@nottinghamnortheastccg.nhs.uk)

The PALS team will:

- Listen – Provide a confidential listening and support service for any concerns that patients, their relatives and carers may have
- Inform – Provide information about NHS treatment and services provided
- Advise – Provide immediate advice on how to resolve queries and advise on voluntary agencies offering help and support
- Help – Help patients, their relatives and carers find their way through the NHS
- Involve – Provide information about how patients and the public may become involved in the planning and development of NHS services

If PALS can't resolve your enquiries then you may wish to take the matter further via the formal NHS Complaints route and the PALS officer will advise you how to do this. Find out more at:

[www.nottinghamnortheastccg.nhs.uk/contact-us](http://www.nottinghamnortheastccg.nhs.uk/contact-us)

