

CHANGES TO THE PRESCRIBING OF GLUTEN FREE FOODS

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.

We have looked at the prices of gluten free foods and 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.

Why is fresh bread not included?

Patient feedback from the consultation highlighted fresh bread often goes out of date quickly and leads to increased wastage.

Why limit prescribing to 4 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 4 units each month we are recognising the possible increased expenditure faced by patients.

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 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 four units 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

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

The total annual spend across South Nottinghamshire is £245,000. The price paid by the NHS for gluten-free foods on prescription is much higher than supermarket prices and in some cases it may be two to three times more expensive.

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 Experience Team - see the information below.

Useful links

- www.nhs.uk/conditions/coeliac-disease
- www.coeliac.org.uk
- www.bbc.co.uk/foods/diets/gluten_free
- www.coeliacmap.com

Patient Experience Team

The South Nottinghamshire CCG Patient Experience Team provides information and advice on local NHS services for patients, their families and carers.

Patient Experience Team

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