

Guidelines for the supply of Gluten-free products in Tees CCGs

Practices should:

1. Prescribe gluten-free foods only to patients with a **confirmed diagnosis** of gluten-sensitive enteropathies, including steatorrhoea due to gluten sensitivity, coeliac disease, and dermatitis herpetiformis
2. Prescribe no more than the quantities recommended by this guidance (see table 1).
3. Prescribe only the approved staple products of bread and flour (see table 2)
4. Prescribe products that do not have a delivery surcharge

Patients may still purchase other products, but should bear in mind advice given with respect to a healthy diet.

1. Recommended number of units per month

Table 1

Age group		New Recommended number of units per month
Male	19 – 59 years	8 x 400g bread (or 4 x 500g mix suitable for making bread)
	60 - 74 years	
	75+ years	
Female	19 - 74 years	6 x 400g bread (or 3 x 500g mix suitable for making bread)
	75+ years	
	Breastfeeding	Add 4 units
	3 rd trimester pregnancy	Add 1 unit
High Physical Activity Level		No additional units
Child	1 – 3 years	6 x 400g bread (or 3 x 500g mix suitable for making bread)
	4 – 6 years	
	7 - 10 years	8 x 400g bread (or 4 x 500g mix suitable for making bread)
	11 - 14 years	
	15 – 18 years	

Where:

1 unit is equivalent to 400g bread/rolls

2 units is equivalent to 500g flour mix

2. Staple foods

Only the following products are approved on NHS prescription in Hartlepool & Stockton-on-Tees and South Tees:

Table 2

GF Food	Product description
Flour	e.g. flour mix, blended mix, white or fibre mix and multipurpose mix
Plain bread rolls or loaves	Brown or white bread
Part baked bread	e.g. white bread, fibre loaf, flat bread

3. General advice

- Patients should be encouraged to eat natural gluten-free foods as part of their balanced diet. These include:
 - Rice and potatoes, oats, beans and some cereals
 - Fruit, vegetables and nuts
 - Meat, poultry, dairy, fish and seafood
- Stop smoking
- Reduce alcohol intake
- Increase physical activity
- Dietary advice is available from Coeliac UK: <https://www.coeliac.org.uk/home/>

Background evidence and rationale

Patients eligible to be prescribed gluten-free products

- Gluten-free products have ACBS (advisory committee on Borderline Substances) approval on basis they may be regarded as drugs for the purpose of prescribing, only for management of the specified conditions listed in the BNF appendix 2, allowing them to be prescribed at NHS expense for patients with:
 - established coeliac disease
 - dermatitis herpetiformis
 - steatorrhoea due to gluten sensitivity
- **Gluten-free products must NOT be prescribed on FP10 to patients with other conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome, wheat intolerance or Asperger's Syndrome that do not have ACBS approval. Any prescribing of these products for these indications should be stopped**
- Patients with positive blood results and those with negative antibodies who are suspected as having coeliac disease should be referred to a gastroenterologist for formal diagnosis prior to commencing a GF diet
- A small bowel biopsy is the gold standard for diagnosis of coeliac disease¹
- NICE guidance on coeliac disease (CG86) outlines the symptoms and patients at risk of coeliac disease as well as evidence on how to identify people with the condition².

Prescribing requirements for NHS supply

- Gluten-free staple items such as bread and flour were first made available on NHS prescription in the late 1960s. At this time there was limited access to a small number of products other than via prescription
- Since then, due to the growing market for gluten-free foods, there is a wide and expanding range of gluten-free products which are readily available in supermarkets. As a result prices of products that were previously very high are now much more comparable to their gluten-containing equivalent.
- Many patients continue to receive products on NHS prescription that are at a much greater expense to the NHS than the equivalent supermarket product.
- It is acknowledged that for many families the increased cost of purchasing gluten-free foods can place strain on household budgets, for this reason, the CCGs wish to support patients with confirmed gluten enteropathies by continuing to provide cost-effective, staple foods on prescription and help them maintain a gluten-free diet.
- This guidance is intended to ensure patients with confirmed disease are able to receive staple products whilst acknowledging that the price differential between gluten-free and equivalent gluten containing products is now lower than it ever has been. The provision of 6-8 units per month is intended to supplement patients to the value of this differential, rather than provide full quantities at NHS expense that are outlined in Coeliac UK's National Prescribing Guidelines for GF food on NHS Prescription.
- It is also not equitable that some patients are able to receive significant amounts of food on NHS prescription, whilst others who also have special dietary needs, are not. It is reasonable to expect coeliac patients should purchase the remainder of gluten-free foods they require themselves.
- Some gluten-free products from certain suppliers are ordered with a surcharge which is passed on to the NHS, practices are advised to prescribe products from manufacturers which do not add on delivery charges. This will ensure the products being supplied are cost-effective. See appendix 1 for a list of manufacturers of fresh bread with no delivery charges, local pharmacies will also be able to advise on which products will incur extra charges.

Quantities of GF products to be supplied

- Practices should refer to the Drug Tariff³ to ensure that the staple product is a prescribable item on the ACBS approved list. This information is also available on the Coeliac UK website⁴.
- Other products such as pasta, cereals, pizza bases, sweet biscuits and cakes should NOT be prescribed under any circumstances. These products should be purchased by the patient,
- Prescriptions should generally be issued monthly, for appropriate maximum quantities of 'staple' food items required by the patient, not exceeding the recommendations in the table above
- Patient choice of 'staple' products should be restricted to within cost-effective products, i.e. those that do not attract delivery surcharges by suppliers.

¹ [Abdulkarim AS & Murray JA \(2003\) Review article: the diagnosis of coeliac disease. Alimentary Pharmacology and Therapeutics. 17: 987-995.](#)

² [NICE guideline CG86: Coeliac disease \(2009\)](#)

³ [NHS Business Services Authority Drug Tariff](#)

⁴ [Coeliac UK website](#)

Putting these guidelines into practice

It is acknowledged that this guideline represents a significant change in provision of gluten-free products on NHS prescription, and that there may be some work involved for practices when implementing the new recommendations.

1. Confirm all patients that are prescribed gluten-free products have a diagnosis of coeliac disease or dermatitis herpetiformis. This should be confirmed by duodenal biopsy or positive coeliac serology, or a consultant gastroenterologist.
2. Communicate the new monthly quantities and approved products to eligible patients and cease prescribing to patients that do not have a diagnosis.
3. Amend patients' repeat prescriptions to only the products and quantities outlined in table 1 and 2, whilst offering patients a choice of product. Practices should be mindful of the extra charges that may be incurred by suppliers (see appendix 1 and 2). Although prescribing of certain cakes, cake mixes, biscuits, cereals, pizza bases, pasta and crackers is allowed on NHS prescription, Hartlepool & Stockton-on-Tees and South Tees CCGs do NOT support the prescribing of these items.
4. Patients who pay for prescriptions can apply for a prescription pre-payment certificate
5. All patients with coeliac disease should be assessed by a dietician at the point of diagnosis
6. Patients are advised to have an annual review with the consultant, GP or dietician.

Appendix 1: List of manufacturers of fresh gluten-free bread products that are available with no delivery charges

Company	Ordering arrangement	Telephone no.
Genius - Fresh bread only	No charge if ordered directly from (via Alliance wholesalers)	0845 8744 000
Juvela – Fresh bread only	Available from UDG with no delivery charge.	01773 510123
Glutafin	Available from UDG with no delivery charge	01773 510123
Warburtons	Available from UDG with no delivery charge	01773 510123
Ultraparm/Lifestyle	No charge if ordered from Alliance wholesalers (delivery charges will apply if ordered directly from Ultraparm).	08448 544983

Appendix 2: List of manufacturers of fresh gluten-free bread products that are available with reduced delivery charges

Company	Ordering arrangement	Telephone no.
Orgran	Available to order from Naturally Good Food. Delivery cost for order weight of up to 1kg is £3.15 Delivery cost for order weight above 1kg is £6.50	01455 556878
Barkat	Delivery charge ranges from £6.50 to £10 depending on size of package. Pharmacists are able to order directly and will be charged via their main wholesaler (AAH/Unichem/Phoenix).	020 8953 4444
Procelli	All orders go through Ambe Medical (main wholesaler). Delivery charge from Ambe is £10 for orders below £75. Next day delivery.	01732 760 900
Innovative solutions	Do not use mainstream wholesalers. Can be ordered directly from company. Delivery charges: >500g - £3.18 500g to 10kg - £7.25 10 to 25kg £14.40	01706 746713
Wellfoods	Flexible ordering arrangements. Available via Unichem and AAH as a specials order (with high carriage charges) or can be ordered directly from the company. Cost when ordered directly: Free for orders of 6 units or more Delivery charge of £7.50.	01226 381 712
Lifestyle	Online order delivery charge: 6 items - £3.95, 12 items - £3.45, 18 items - £2.95 24 items or more there is no delivery charge. Direct order from pharmacies For the first 6 months, the pharmacy has to use one of their recommended specials wholesalers. After this period, the pharmacy can open an account with Lifestyle. Orders for less than 8 items will incur a delivery charge of £7.75	0845 270 1400

Tables reproduced from: PrescQIPP Bulletin 69 February 2015; Guidance on the prescribing of gluten-free foods

Charges are likely to be subject to change so it is best to check with a manufacturer or community pharmacy before ordering