

ERoY. Coeliac disease: Policy on Prescribing of Gluten Free Products

Aim

To provide an appropriate amount of basic foodstuffs for a healthy diet to an individual with established coeliac disease (CD), dermatitis herpetiformis (DH) and steatorrhea due to gluten sensitivity. The prescribed items are for individuals and not family and friends.

An increasingly wide range of products are available for purchase for people with coeliac disease, both those specifically designed for them and other foodstuffs. Many are available from normal food outlets. There is a concern that a small number of patients are demanding more than is appropriate of a wider range of products, which is why these guidelines have been developed.

Diagnosis

CD is not an allergy or simple food intolerance. It is a genetic autoimmune disease triggered by eating gluten. It is more common in patients with other autoimmune conditions including Type 1 diabetes and thyroid disease.

When a GP suspects a diagnosis of coeliac disease, a serological test for the detection of endomysial and human tissue transglutaminase should be arranged. If the result is positive or, despite a negative result, the GP still strongly suspects CD the GP should refer to the gastroenterologist for endoscopy and biopsy.

CD should not be confused with:

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), which is a chronic non-inflammatory condition characterised by abdominal pain, bloating and change in bowel habit

or

Wheat Intolerance – some people with IBS find that their symptoms of IBS are made worse by eating wheat. Reducing the wheat content of the diet may improve symptoms but there is no need to remove other gluten containing foods from the diet.

Prescribing

Prescribing of gluten free foods is restricted to individuals with established coeliac disease (CD), dermatitis herpetiformis (DH) and steatorrhea due to gluten sensitivity only and no other conditions such as IBS and Wheat Intolerance.

The CCG has decided to limit the number of units (for all age groups) to 8 units per month and restrict the items that can be prescribed to include GF bread and GF mixes only.

The gluten-free food products the CCG will continue to provide on NHS prescription are:

- Bread (1 x 400gm loaf = 1 unit)
- Mixes (1 x 500gm mix = 2 units)

Other additional basic foods and non-essential GF products are readily available to purchase from supermarkets, pharmacies or health food stores etc. Some supermarkets have useful

gluten free advice on their websites.

Prescribing should be for a maximum of one month supply at a time, in line with normal CCG policy. In addition, large quantities are not recommended because of shelf life and storage issues.

Prescriptions should be annotated with “ACBS” (Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances).

Patients who pay for their prescriptions can obtain pre-payment certificates from <https://apps.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/ppcwebsales/patient.do> or phone 0300 330 1341

Prescribing Guidance

Changes to the availability of gluten-free foods on NHS prescription in England came into effect from 4th December 2018

NHS England has published [Prescribing gluten-free foods in primary care: guidance for CCGs](#).

Changes to the Blacklist

The National Health Service (General Medical Services Contracts) (Prescription of Drugs etc.) Regulations 2004 were amended to remove previously listed GF foods from Schedule 1, which is reproduced in Part XVIII A (the ‘Blacklist’) of the Drug Tariff. Instead, the wording in the regulations was amended to prevent prescribers from prescribing all GF and very low GF foods with the exceptions for GF bread and GF mixes, and for very low gluten bread and food mixes. The Amendment Regulations were laid before Parliament in November 2018 and came into force on 4th December 2018.

Changes to the ACBS list

In the December 2018 edition of the Drug Tariff, the ACBS list – also known as the ‘Borderline Substances list’ – in Part XV was amended to exclude all GF products in the categories of biscuits, cereals, cooking aids, grains/flours, and pasta. However, the GF breads and GF mixes (<https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/pharmacies-gp-practices-and-appliance-contractors/drug-tariff>) were retained in the ACBS list and remain available on prescription in primary care.