

Changes to gluten free products available on prescription

Why have we 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 and everyone needs to take responsibility. We have reviewed the prescribing of gluten free (GF) food because a wide range of products are now widely available in supermarkets. Also the vast majority of foods, including many staple carbohydrates are naturally gluten free. We have taken in to consideration all the feedback that we have received and decided to reduce the number of units and range of GF food that can be prescribed but will review the situation again in 6-12 months.

Why allow 8 units of bread and flour?

Allowing bread on prescription is a gesture towards the extra cost as it is considered to be a staple food in the UK. The inclusion of flour means that you will be able to make other foods including bread. However, commercially produced GF food is not required at every meal. There are many other foods which are naturally gluten free such as potatoes, rice and some noodles.

Why reduce the range of bread and flour products available on prescription?

Loaves suitable for toasting and making sandwiches will remain on prescription. There is a choice of fresh, long life, white, brown and high fibre bread although the higher cost items will no longer be available. Bread items such as flat breads, burger rolls, and baguettes will also no longer be available on prescription because they are generally more expensive and we also want to make it easier for GPs to process your prescription and use their time more effectively.

How can I maintain a nutritionally balanced diet?

We have retained some bread that is high in calcium for those people who rely on this as part of their daily requirements. However, it is possible to maintain a nutritionally balanced diet by eating other foods rich in calcium.

What if I have other intolerances?

There is a selection of gluten free bread and flour which is also wheat free, lactose free and milk free available on prescription for those who have multiple intolerances.

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

All GF foods can be purchased from a pharmacy or supermarket or ordered directly from the manufacturer. There is no restriction which requires a prescription for a GF product. There is no expectation of 'better quality' when a GF 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.

Where can I buy gluten free foods?

Gluten free foods can be purchased from a pharmacy or supermarket or ordered directly from the manufacturer. Major retailers with high street branches have all confirmed that they stock GF foods.

Do GF food products available on prescription have higher nutritional value?

There is no expectation of 'better quality' when a gluten free food is prescribed rather than bought. Some GF foods may have added calcium or may be free from wheat, lactose or milk and may be preferred by some people. A selection of these can still be prescribed by your GP otherwise you can purchase from a pharmacy or supermarket or order directly from the manufacturer.

What if I'm concerned about my health?

If you are concerned about your health, then make an appointment to go and see your GP.

What if I'm concerned about my diet?

There is lots of information on the Coeliac UK website at www.coeliac.org.uk that you can access such as:

- Information about eating out
- Gluten free food on a budget
- Shopping and food labels
- Gluten free check list

If you require specific advice ask you GP if you can be referred to a dietitian.

Dietary advice upon diagnosis

When you are first diagnosed with Coeliac disease, your doctor will ask if you would like to be referred to a dietitian for dietary advice.

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. Everyone needs to take responsibility.

How can I give my opinions about this change?

We always want to hear what patients think, whether that is positive or negative, and it will help our review of this guidance. You can register your opinions by contacting us at communications@westleicestershireccg.nhs.uk