

MEDICINES UPDATE – June 2018

Guidance on the Prescribing of Gluten-Free Foods

The aim of this flyer is to provide guidance on the prescribing of gluten-free food for patients with coeliac disease, confirmed gluten-sensitive enteropathies and dermatitis herpetiformis in primary care.

This is in line with the recommendations from the Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC) - "Availability of Gluten Free Food on Prescription in Primary Care"¹.

Key Points

1. Gluten-free foods prescribed in primary care should be restricted to bread and flour mixes¹.
2. Gluten-free biscuits, cereals, cooking aids, grains/flours and pasta **should no longer** be prescribed in primary care¹.

Table 1: Summary of Recommended Gluten Free Product Prescription

Category	When to Prescribe	Examples of Gluten Free Foods
Staple recommended	These items are recommended for prescribing in primary care. Use the monthly maximum number of units (Table 2) to guide your prescribing. Table 3 defines a unit.	Bread loaves, bread rolls, bread/flour mix, which are all Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances (ACBS) listed.
Staple Non-recommended	DHSC no longer recommends the prescribing of these staple gluten free foods in primary care, as they are now widely available in supermarkets, budget stores and on-line.	Biscuits, crackers, cereals, cooking aids, grains/flours and pasta
Luxury	Coeliac UK do not recommend the prescribing of these items, as these products do not fall in line with healthy eating recommendations and/or are not considered necessary within an individual's diet.	Sweet biscuits, cakes and cake mixes, ready meals, gravy, baking powder, stuffing, chocolate, ice cream cones, pies, pastries and pastry mixes

Table 2: Maximum number of units to be prescribed on a monthly basis⁴

Age group	Maximum number of monthly prescription units
1 - 3 years	10
4 - 6 years	11
7 - 10 years	13
11 - 14 years	15
15 - 18 years	18
Male 19 - 59 years	18
Male 60 - 74 years	16
Male 75 + years	14
Female 19 - 74 years	14
Female 75 + years	12
Breast feeding	+ 4
3rd trimester pregnancy	+ 1

Table 3: Unit definition for gluten free staple foods⁴

Prescribable food item	Equivalent number of units
400g bread	1
100-250g rolls/baguettes	1/2
251g-400g rolls/baguettes	1
500g bread mix / flour mix	2

- Coeliac UK² supports the recommendations by the DHSC to allow gluten free bread and flour mixes **only** on prescription in England.
- Gluten free bread and flour mixes approved by the ACBS should be prescribed on NHS prescriptions³.
- Coeliac UK produces a monthly "Prescribable Products list", to help you identify all gluten free bread and flour mixes which are approved for prescribing³. This can be found [here](#).
- Each prescription for gluten free foods should be for a **one month** supply⁵.
- Regular review of gluten free foods on prescription is important as dietary needs vary throughout life.⁵
- Adherence to the gluten-free diet should also be regularly reviewed as well as ensuring the correct amounts and types of gluten free food is being prescribed.⁵
- Remind patients that a greater range of gluten free products are readily available in supermarkets⁶.

2. Coeliac UK welcomes Government continued support of key gluten free staples on prescription, Coeliac UK. Available at: <https://www.coeliac.org.uk/document-library/4928-coeliac-uk-welcomes-government-continued-support-of-key-gluten/?return=/about-us/news/coeliac-uk-statement-on-department-of-health-decision-on/> Accessed on 19/04/18

3. Prescriptions, Gluten Free Diet & Lifestyle, Coeliac UK. Available at: <https://www.coeliac.org.uk/gluten-free-diet-and-lifestyle/prescriptions/> Accessed on 19/04/2018

4. National Prescribing, Gluten Free Diet & Lifestyle, Coeliac UK. Available at: <https://www.coeliac.org.uk/gluten-free-diet-and-lifestyle/prescriptions/national-prescribing-guidelines/>

5. Coeliac UK, Primary Care Society of Gastroenterology, British Dietetic Association et al, Gluten free foods: a revised prescribing guide. Available at: <https://www.coeliac.org.uk/document-library/378-gluten-free-foods-a-revised-prescribing-guide/?return=/gluten-free-diet-and-lifestyle/prescriptions/national-prescribing-guidelines/> Accessed on 19/04/2018

6. Food shopping, Gluten Free Diet & Lifestyle, Coeliac UK. Available at: <https://www.coeliac.org.uk/gluten-free-diet-and-lifestyle/food-shopping/> Accessed on 19/04/2018

7. Coeliac disease: recognition, assessment and management, NICE guideline NG20, published September 2015. Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng20/resources/coeliac-disease-recognition-assessment-and-management-pdf-1837325178565> Accessed On 19/04/2018

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1. Availability of Gluten Free Food on Prescription in Primary Care, Department of Health & Social Care, published January 2018. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/678181/report_of_responses_-_gluten_free_food_prescribing_consultation.pdf Accessed on 19/04/18