

COMMISSIONING POLICY FOR GLUTEN FREE FOOD

NHS Trafford Clinical Commissioning Group does not fund the prescribing of Gluten Free (GF) Food (no exceptions).

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Author(s)	Christina McCurdie Medicines Optimisation Pharmacist Medicines Management Team, Midlands and Lancashire Commissioning Support Unit
Responsible Committee / Officers	NHS Trafford Clinical Commissioning Group Clinical Committee Rebecca Demaine, Associate Director of Primary Care & Leigh Lord, Head of Medicines Optimisation
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	For publication on our web site.
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Further information about this document:

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Author(s) Contact(s) for further information about this document	Contact for further information – christina.mccurdie1@nhs.net Authors: Christina McCurdie Medicines Management Pharmacist Medicines Management Team, Midlands and Lancashire Commissioning Support Unit
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INTRODUCTION

NHS Trafford Clinical Commissioning Group currently spends approximately £87k annually on the prescribing of gluten free (GF) food.

Patients with gluten-sensitive enteropathy, including coeliac disease, must follow a strict GF diet.

Prescribing costs of GF food are expected to increase annually as increasing numbers of patients are diagnosed with gluten-sensitive enteropathy. There is also pressure on clinicians to prescribe GF foods for patients with other conditions that are not covered by NHS exemptions.

GF food is expensive when obtained via NHS prescription and is considerably more costly than the price of purchasing GF food. Additionally, there is less flexibility when utilising the prescription route for items such as bread where pharmacies have to order in multiples rather than single items. This creates a storage issue for patients.

There is now a wide range of competitively priced gluten-free foods available for purchase in supermarkets, including products that are naturally gluten-free and those that have been manufactured specifically for patients with gluten sensitivity.

Additional dietary requirements can be achieved by choosing healthy foods, which are naturally gluten-free. **Specially manufactured gluten-free foods should provide no more than 15% total energy.** It is recommended that total carbohydrate should provide about 50% of energy intake. Non-milk extrinsic sugars should not exceed 11% of energy intake. Starches, intrinsic and milk sugars should therefore contribute about 39% of energy intake (DOH, 1991)¹⁰. Consumption of naturally gluten-free foods such as potatoes and rice will also contribute to energy requirements.

NHS Trafford faces a £23m deficit in funding over the next two years therefore due to the expense which is likely to increase and the wide availability of GF foods in supermarkets, NHS Trafford CCG have made the difficult decision to cease funding through the prescription route.

SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to outline the decision taken by NHS Trafford Clinical Commissioning Group to stop all prescribing of GF food (with no exceptions) and to support prescribers to implement this decision.

This policy will ensure equity of service for all residents of Trafford and will allow the same expectation of what will be provided from the GP Practice or other services.

This policy applies to all services contracted by or delivered by the NHS across Trafford CCG including:

- a) GP Practices – GPs and NMPs
- b) Out of hours and extended hours providers
- c) Acute Hospitals
- d) Out-Patient Clinics
- e) NHS Community Providers
- f) Independent providers
- g) Community pharmacies

This policy applies to all people (adults and children) who are registered with a GP in Trafford (permanent or temporary resident) or who access a NHS service in Trafford.

GLUTEN FREE FOOD PRESCRIBING

The Department of Health in January 2018 concluded a national consultation regarding the availability of gluten-free foods on NHS and now recommends the restriction of gluten-free prescribing to bread and mixes only (Appendix 1).

Due to huge financial deficit that NHS Trafford Clinical Commissioning Group faces the Governing Body has decided that they can no longer support the provision of GF foods via prescription for any registered patient in Trafford.

Patients can seek support and advice from local dietetic services in Trafford. These are provided by the Community Nutrition and Dietetics team at Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust.

Patients will be expected to purchase GF foods where appropriate.

Patients should be signposted to appropriate sources of information on maintaining a healthy gluten-free diet.

MONITORING PRESCRIBING POLICY IMPLEMENTATION: GF FOOD PRESCRIBING REVIEW

NHS Trafford Clinical Commissioning Group has a duty to ensure that the local NHS budget is spent in an appropriate way.

The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring that all agreed actions are carried out by healthcare professionals according to this policy.

Implementation of the policy will be monitored via ePACT data and recorded within the CCG Financial Recovery Plan.

Implementation of the changes at GP practice level will be done via pharmacist and technician support provided by the Midlands and Lancashire Commissioning Support Unit alongside the Medicines Optimisation Team.

Monitoring of the implementation of the policy is being tracked by a medicines optimisation project sub group of the Financial Recovery Board and supported by the Programme Management Office (PMO).

Appendix 1

- Patient letter and information sheet (to be issued by GP Practices to all registered patients affected by the decision) - to include contact details for concerns, patient advice eg. Eatwell plate ([The Eatwell Guide - Live Well - NHS Choices](#)), [Gluten-free checklist - Coeliac UK](#), Coeliac UK food and drink directory (available to coeliac UK members only), Coeliac UK GF food checker mobile app , arrangements for ongoing education and support.
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/availability-of-gluten-free-foods-on-nhs-prescription>

Example of Patient Letter -

Dear Sir / Madam

Gluten Free Food

NHS Trafford Clinical Commissioning Group is a membership organisation led by 32 GP practices, responsible for planning and buying healthcare services for the local population. It simply does not have enough money to continue to buy all the services it currently does in the same way as before. To address this, it needs to find ways of reducing costs in some areas in order to protect other essential services.

One of the areas that have been identified by the Clinical Commissioning Group is the prescribing of Gluten Free products which are provided to patients on prescription. These products – which include flour, bread and pasta, were added to the list of products available on prescription when they were not easily available to buy locally.

Today these products are more widely available from supermarkets and are sold to the public at prices that are considerably lower than the NHS is charged when bought for use on prescription. There are also many other alternative sources of carbohydrate that do not contain gluten, for example rice and potatoes.

In addition to improved access to gluten free foods, gluten containing products are not necessary for a healthy diet and patients with gluten sensitivity can safely exclude it from their diet and still eat healthily without purchasing special foods. Patients can safely eat meat, fish, vegetables, fruit, rice and most dairy products, and there are now a wide variety of products on the market e.g rice cakes, crackers etc to allow patients to complement their gluten free diets safely and obtain all of their nutritional requirements.

For more information and advice about following a gluten free diet visit:

<https://www.coeliac.org.uk/gluten-free-diet-and-lifestyle/gf-diet/> or visit <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/> to learn more about general healthy eating.

The Clinical Commissioning Group has asked the practice to send you this letter because you currently receive Gluten Free food on prescription. Following a NHS England national consultation and subsequent local engagement, Trafford Clinical Commissioning Group has decided to stop funding Gluten Free food on prescription from 5th November 2018.

Your next prescription will reflect this decision and will not contain any Gluten Free food items. Local supermarkets and pharmacies are also aware of this decision.

Should you require more information please refer to our patient information leaflet or contact your GP practice and ask to speak to a member of the practice-based pharmacist/technician.

If you still have further questions, comments or are not satisfied with the response received, please telephone Patient Experience Matters at: 0161 873 9577 or email:

customercare.trafford@nhs.net

Yours sincerely

Dr Mark Jarvis
Medical Director
Trafford Clinical Commissioning Group

Appendix 2 References/resources and associated documents

Guidance on the prescribing of gluten-free foods. PrescQIPP. Bulletin 69 February 2015 4.1 Available at: <https://www.prescgipp.info/resources/send/81-gluten-free/1586-bulletin-69-gluten-free-prescribing> Accessed 1st June, 2018.

Acknowledgements:

Medicines Management Team - West Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group.