

Gluten free foods

Information for patients

With immediate effect you will no longer receive gluten free foods on NHS prescription. This applies, whether you have received gluten free foods as a prescription from your GP or through the community pharmacy scheme.

This follows a decision that was made by NHS Trafford Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) which is made up of all GPs in Trafford, including your practice. This decision was based on evidence gathered from the public and health professionals. The local engagement undertaken helped us to understand any impact our plans could have on our patients.

The NHS in Trafford is under enormous financial pressure, due to increasing demand and rising costs. NHS Trafford CCG is predicting it will end the year with a deficit and is now reviewing everything it pays for to ensure services provide the best clinical outcomes, based on the needs of the population and the money it has available to spend.

NHS Trafford CCG spends £80,000 a year on prescribing gluten free foods

Gluten free products in shops are sold to the public at prices that are considerably lower than the NHS is charged when bought for use for prescribing to patients. This makes it more expensive when provided by prescription than when purchased at a shop.

This decision was not taken lightly and the NHS has to make some difficult decisions to ensure it can continue to fund essential services such as hospitals, mental health services and vital medicines.

If you have coeliac disease or dermatitis herpetiformis, your GP or dietitian will still be able to support you to manage your condition. The following information may also be useful to help you manage a gluten free diet.

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The gluten free diet

The treatment for coeliac disease is to follow a strict gluten free diet. Gluten is a protein found in wheat, rye and barley and foods containing these should not be eaten. Some people with coeliac disease may also be sensitive to oats.

There are many naturally gluten free foods that you can continue to eat on a gluten free diet:

- Potatoes
- Rice
- Pulses (peas, beans and lentils)
- Nuts and seeds
- Corn, millet, polenta, quinoa
- Meat, fish, eggs, plain tofu
- Milk, cheese
- Fruit, vegetables

Where can I buy gluten free foods now that prescriptions have stopped?

You will need to buy all gluten free substitute foods you want to eat including:

- Bread/rolls/baguettes
- Pasta
- Flour
- Crackers
- Pizza bases
- Luxury items such as cake, biscuits and pastry items

You can buy many gluten free substitute foods, such as gluten free breads, flour and pasta from many supermarkets, health food shops, by mail and online

Supermarkets

Many supermarkets stock a range of gluten free foods. These are often in the 'free from' aisle section or alongside other foods in the bakery, cereal or frozen foods sections. Supermarkets often list gluten free foods on their websites and you may wish to check before you go shopping. You can also ask staff in store to help you find gluten free foods.

Gluten free Guarantee

Coeliac UK's gluten free guarantee campaign is a commitment by supermarkets to sell eight core gluten free items in stock across all their stores. These are white bread, pasta, cereal, flour, cereal bars, rolls, crackers and one other bread (brown or seeded). Asda and Morrisons supermarkets have made the Gluten-free Guarantee (GfG), a commitment to stock at least one product from the GfG basket of eight staple gluten free categories. Three leading supermarkets: Waitrose, Tesco and Marks & Spencer have also made significant progress in meeting the GfG.

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Budget supermarkets (Aldi and Lidl)

Aldi and Lidl have a smaller gluten free range. You can ask staff or check online for which foods are suitable for a gluten free diet. They may occasionally sell gluten free foods, so keep checking the shelves when you shop there.

Supermarket online shopping and delivery

Most supermarkets offer an online shopping service. Your shopping is delivered to your home at a time slot you choose. You can shop online with Asda, Iceland, Morrisons, Ocado, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose. Please note some supermarkets have a minimum order amount, so check before you place your order.

Internet Shopping

There are several gluten free manufactures that sell their gluten free products online. There are also websites dedicated to 'free from' foods that supply gluten free products from a range of manufacturers.

Convenience store

Shops such a Co-op, SPAR, Londis and local convenience stores sometimes sell gluten free foods or can often order specific gluten free items. Ask a member of staff if they can order gluten free products for you to buy.

Health foods shops

Many health food shops stock gluten free foods and naturally gluten free alternative flours and grains. Staff will be able to help you.

Pharmacy

Some products you may have previously received on prescription may not be available to buy in the supermarkets. Ask your pharmacist if they are able to order these items in for you to buy.

Delivered ready meals

If you have difficulty shopping and preparing foods, or would like some frozen gluten free ready meals available, Wiltshire Farm Foods and Oak House foods produce a selection of gluten free frozen meals with free delivery (free over £30 for Oak House Foods). They deliver across Trafford. You can place and order online or by telephone:

- www.wiltshirefarmfoods.com or call 0800 077 3100
- www.oakhousefoods.co.uk or call 0333 370 6700

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Questions and answers:

Why have you stopped prescribing gluten free products?

The reason for this is that in recent years the variety and accessibility of gluten free products has both improved and increased. This means that as well as being a higher quality, gluten free products are also not as expensive as they once were.

The NHS still gets charged more than double the price for gluten free items than people can buy them for in supermarkets - making them more expensive when provided by prescription than when purchased directly by patients in shops.

Until recently, patients with coeliac disease who were registered with GP practices in Trafford could still be prescribed gluten free products. Following local engagement in late 2017/early 2018 and due to the expense to the NHS which is likely to increase and the wider availability of gluten free foods in supermarkets, NHS Trafford CCG made the decision to cease funding gluten free foods through the prescription route.

Why has this been chosen as a change to help the local NHS save money?

Because gluten free products do not actually need to be prescribed for clinical reasons. For example, they are not products which can only be given following a clinical assessment or diagnosis. They come under the banner of 'low priority prescribing'

Other 'low priority' prescribing items include products and medicines that readily available on shop shelves or over the counter in pharmacies. These include paracetamol, cold and flu treatments, head lice lotions, moisturisers or hay fever remedies.

Trafford CCG is currently reviewing 'low priority prescribing' following guidance from NHS England.

What happens if I have a repeat prescription for gluten free foods?

Your next repeat prescription will not contain any gluten free food items. Your Medicines Co-ordinator in your GP practice will be able to support you and your practice in the transition of these changes.

How can I keep my shopping costs down?

Check the reduced section in supermarkets and shops, especially the bakery or frozen food section.

You may find gluten free items close to their best before date or used by dates at a reduced price.

- Shop around and try different supermarkets or online to get the best price.
- You could try replacing specialist gluten free foods in some meals with cheaper natural gluten free alternatives e.g. rice instead of gluten free pasta, jacket potato instead of a sandwich. This will reduce the amount of specialist gluten free foods you need to buy.

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Food Labelling

Remember to check that any food you buy is gluten free. Many specialist gluten free foods will say '*Gluten free*' or '*Suitable for coeliacs*' on the label, or will have the *Crossed Grain* symbol. If none of these are shown or you are unsure, please check the ingredients or ask someone in the shop to help you.

Coeliac UK has more detailed information on food labelling and produces a Food and Drink Directory. Coeliac UK also has a gluten free smartphone app, which you can download from www.coeliac.org.uk or from the App store for IOS devices and Google Play store from Android devices.

Where can I get advice or support about coeliac disease or gluten free food?

You can find a wealth of information about coeliac disease, its symptoms and its causes on the NHS choices website and search 'coeliac': www.nhs.uk

Coeliac UK also has a wide range of information and support on offer: www.coeliac.org.uk

For information about eating well visit: www.nhs/live-well/eat-well/the-eatwell-guide