

Changes to gluten-free products available on prescription

Why have we stopped prescribing some gluten-free foods?

As the demand for NHS services continues to increase, we need to look at everything we do locally to ensure the NHS uses its funding appropriately and fairly. Everyone needs to take responsibility. We have reviewed the prescribing of gluten-free food because a wide range of products are now widely available in supermarkets. The vast majority of foods, including many staple carbohydrates are naturally gluten-free. We have taken into consideration all the feedback we have received and decided to reduce the number of units and range of gluten-free 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 gluten-free 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. We also want to make it easier for GPs to process your prescription to 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 gluten-free 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 gluten-free product. There is no expectation of 'better quality' when a gluten-free food is prescribed rather than bought. Patients may find it convenient and cost-effective to purchase items online and have them delivered or to ask their Pharmacy or supermarket to order the products for them.

If I currently order items that are not on the new list can I still order them as part of

my eight units?

No, from 1 December 2016 you can only order from the new list. Other gluten-free products can be bought online or at supermarkets where they are readily available.

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 gluten-free foods.

Do gluten-free 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 gluten-free 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 your 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@eastleicestershireccg.nhs.uk