

Guidance on the Prescribing of Gluten-Free Foods for patients with a confirmed diagnosis of coeliac disease or dermatitis herpetiformis

The recommendations are in line with the Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC) - "Availability of Gluten Free Food on Prescription in Primary Care"¹ and NHS England – "Prescribing Gluten-Free Foods in Primary Care: Guidance for CCGs"².

Key Points

- Gluten-free foods prescribed in primary care should be restricted to bread loaves, rolls and flour mixes^{1,2}.
- Gluten-free biscuits, cereals, cooking aids, grains/flours and pasta **should not** 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 3) to guide your prescribing. Table 2 defines a unit.	Bread loaves, rolls, baguettes, bread/flour mix, which are all Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances (ACBS) listed ³ .
Staple Not-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 Not Recommended	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: Unit definition for gluten free staple foods⁶

Food item	Equivalent number of units
400g bread/rolls/baguettes ⁵	1
500g bread mix/flour mix ⁵	2

- Coeliac UK⁴ supports the recommendations by the DHSC and NHS England to allow gluten free bread and flour mixes **only** on prescription in England.
- Gluten free bread and flour mixes approved by the ACBS³ should be prescribed on NHS prescriptions⁵.
- Each prescription for gluten free foods should be for a **one-month** supply⁷.
- Regular review of gluten free foods on prescription is important as dietary needs vary throughout life, adjusting quantities as required during pregnancy and breastfeeding⁷. See table 3.
- Remind patients that a greater range of gluten free products are readily available in supermarkets⁸.

Table 3: Maximum number of units to be prescribed on a monthly basis⁶ (Bread and flour mixes only)

Age group	Maximum number of monthly prescription units
Child under 10 years	8
Child 11 - 18 years	12
Female 19 years and older	8
Male 19 years and older	12
Breast feeding	Additional 4
3rd trimester pregnancy	Additional 1

For all enquiries, please contact the Southwark Medicines Optimisation Team on: southwark.medicine-optimisation@selondonics.nhs.uk

References:

1. [Availability of Gluten Free Food on Prescription in Primary Care, Department of Health & Social Care, published January 2018.](#)
2. [Prescribing Gluten-Free Foods in Primary Care: Guidance for CCGs.](#)
3. [Drug Tariff accessed via NHS Business Services Authority](#)
4. [Coeliac UK welcomes Government continued support of key gluten free staples on prescription, Coeliac UK.](#)
5. [Prescriptions, Gluten Free Diet & Lifestyle, Coeliac UK.](#)
6. [National Prescribing, Gluten Free Diet & Lifestyle, Coeliac UK.](#)
7. [Coeliac UK, Primary Care Society of Gastroenterology, British Dietetic Association et al, Gluten free foods: a revised prescribing guide.](#)
8. [Food shopping, Gluten Free Diet & Lifestyle, Coeliac UK.](#)