

**DERBYSHIRE JOINT AREA PRESCRIBING COMMITTEE  
(JAPC)**

**Gluten free foods prescribing policy**

The Derbyshire CCGs do not routinely commission the prescribing of  
gluten free foods

All gluten free foods have been classified as **BLACK**

This decision was taken by the four Derbyshire CCG Governing Bodies in November/December 2017 and follows a recent period of public engagement across Derbyshire.

**Rationale**

- Historically, availability of gluten free foods was limited, therefore obtaining these products from community pharmacies via prescriptions improved access to them. With the increased awareness of coeliac disease and gluten sensitivity as well as a general trend towards eating less gluten, these products are now much more widely available. All major supermarkets and many other retailers now commonly stock gluten free foods as well as other special diet alternatives both online and in-store. Furthermore, improved food labelling now means people are able to see whether ordinary food products are free from gluten and can be safely eaten.
- The price paid by the NHS for gluten free foods on prescription is much higher than the supermarket prices available to the public.<sup>1,2</sup>
- We acknowledge that gluten free food products are often more expensive than their gluten containing equivalents but the price difference is not as wide as it once was. It is also possible to eat a gluten free diet that follows the Eatwell Guide model for balanced eating without the need for any specialist dietary foods, simply by choosing naturally gluten free carbohydrate containing foods (e.g. rice and potatoes) as part of a healthy balanced diet.<sup>3</sup>

**References**

1. Burden et al. Cost and Availability of Gluten Free food in the UK. Postgrad Med J 2015;0:1-5
2. British National Formulary (BNF) [Online]. November 2017. <https://bnf.nice.org.uk/> Accessed 08/12/17
3. Public Health England. Eatwell Guide <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide> Accessed 08/12/17
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8. Coeliac UK. Gluten free diet on a budget [Online]. [www.coeliac.org.uk](http://www.coeliac.org.uk) Accessed 08/12/17

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## Guidance for clinicians on prescribing of gluten free foods

Subsequent to the CCGs' Governing Bodies decisions, the following is recommended:

- Newly diagnosed patients should not routinely be prescribed gluten free food products and existing patients receiving gluten free food products on prescription should be informed that prescribing of gluten free foods is no longer routinely available.
- Patients newly diagnosed with coeliac disease should have the opportunity to discuss how to follow a gluten free diet with a healthcare professional with specialist knowledge of coeliac disease. Existing patients with on-going symptoms following a gluten free diet should also have access to additional specialist advice.<sup>4</sup>
- In line with the NICE quality standards for coeliac disease<sup>5,6</sup> patients should be informed about the importance of a gluten free diet and given information and support to help them follow it, including:
  - Information on which types of food contain gluten and suitable alternatives, including gluten-free substitutes
  - Information on which types of food are naturally gluten-free
  - Explanations of food labelling information
  - Sources about gluten-free diets, recipe ideas and cookbooks
  - How to manage social situations, eating out and travelling away from home, including travel abroad
  - Avoiding cross contamination in the home and minimising the risk of accidental gluten intake when eating out
  - The role of national and local coeliac support groups
- People with coeliac disease should be offered an annual review which should include:
  - measuring weight and height
  - review of symptoms
  - considering the need for assessment of diet and adherence to the gluten-free diet
  - considering the need for specialist dietetic and nutritional advice
  - considering the need for referral to a GP or consultant to address any concerns about possible complications or comorbidities.
- In order to support clinicians with the above recommendations, the following supporting documents are available:
  - Gluten free checklist
  - Gluten free diet on a budget
- In addition signpost patients to the Coeliac UK website:

[www.coeliac.org.uk/gluten-free-diet-and-lifestyle/food-and-drink-directory/](http://www.coeliac.org.uk/gluten-free-diet-and-lifestyle/food-and-drink-directory/)

This comprehensive food and drink directory gives details on where to purchase gluten free foods. The website also contains a wealth of useful information on how to follow a gluten free diet, including advice about shopping and reading food labels, cooking and baking, eating out, travelling and specific advice for children and for those eating on a budget.<sup>7,8</sup>

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- Advise patients:
  - Gluten free food products can be purchased from the majority of large and medium sized supermarkets, some smaller local convenience stores and online or from their community pharmacist.
  - It is possible to eat a healthy balanced gluten free diet without the need for specialist dietary foods. Encourage patients to use as many naturally gluten free foods such as rice and potatoes as possible, rather than specialist products that have been manufactured to be gluten free.
  - It is important to maintain a healthy, balanced gluten free diet to ensure adequate intake of vitamins and minerals.

### **Prescriber: professional and contractual context**

During discussion with the patient, when considering what treatment and ongoing monitoring is required, prescribers are asked to be mindful of the following:

- That GPs have clinical freedom to act in an individual patient's best interest where exceptional clinical circumstances exist that warrant deviation from this policy. Any such decisions should be recorded clearly in the patient's clinical record.
- That within their Primary Medical Services contract with NHSE, GPs have a contractual obligation relating to patients with chronic disease to make available such treatment (including any prescription deemed to be appropriate after discussion with the patient) as is necessary and appropriate, and to provide advice in connection with the patient's health, including relevant health promotion advice.
- That reference to local prescribing guidelines is good professional practice.
- That consideration of GMC professional obligations to use NHS resources wisely is good professional practice.

### **Guidance for patients on prescribing of gluten free foods**

The four Derbyshire CCGs have made a decision that routine prescribing of gluten-free food products is not recommended.

- Information to support a gluten free diet is available on the Coeliac UK website:

[www.coeliac.org.uk/gluten-free-diet-and-lifestyle/food-and-drink-directory/](http://www.coeliac.org.uk/gluten-free-diet-and-lifestyle/food-and-drink-directory/)

You will be able to access a comprehensive food and drink directory which gives details on where to purchase gluten free foods. The website also contains a wealth of useful information on how to follow a gluten free diet, including advice about shopping and reading food labels, cooking and baking, eating out, travelling and specific advice for children and for those eating on a budget.<sup>7,8</sup> Please note that access to some areas of the Coeliac UK website requires a subscription.

- Gluten free food products can be purchased from the majority of large and medium sized supermarkets, some smaller local convenience stores and online. You can also buy gluten free foods through your local community pharmacy.
- It is possible to eat a healthy balanced gluten free diet without the need for specialist dietary foods. Use as many naturally gluten free foods such as rice and potatoes as possible, rather than specialist products that have been manufactured to be gluten free.

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