

Gluten Free Prescribing Guidelines – SY ICB

Overview

The Advisory Committee for Borderline Substances (ACBS) recommends that gluten free (GF) bread and flour mixes can be provided on the NHS only where patients have an established Gluten Sensitive Enteropathy with coexisting established wheat sensitivity (which we define as a specialist diagnosis of Coeliac Disease or Dermatitis Herpetiformis). Providing gluten free products for any other indication such as non-coeliac gluten sensitivity, gluten ataxia (unless biopsy confirms enteropathy) and autism is not permitted on the NHS.

SY ICB supports the prescribing of gluten free breads and mixes, in line with the 2023 Coeliac UK recommendations for England (see [table 1](#) below). Provision of these items should be considered as a supplementation to the diet and not to replace the purchase of all the GF products.

Other GF products such as biscuits, cake mixes, cereals, cooking aids, pizza bases and pasta cannot be prescribed on the NHS.

People are encouraged to eat a healthy, well-balanced diet through the consumption of naturally GF foods, including starchy staples such as potatoes, rice, buckwheat, corn, maize, polenta, millet, quinoa, sago, sweet potato, tapioca and yams. Wheat and other gluten containing products can be but do not have to be part of a balanced diet. Wholemeal breads and fibre mixes can have better taste and texture, be more filling and have additional health benefits for example promoting good gut health.

Provision of gluten free breads and mixes

Gluten free foods are widely available and can be purchased from a variety of retail outlets. Clinicians in South Yorkshire can also prescribe or provide gluten free bread and mixes to support adherence to a gluten free diet. where this is needed.

Clinicians should use their clinical judgement and take energy requirements into account when deciding on appropriate quantities to prescribe, seeking advice from a dietitian if needed. Table 1 below shows the maximum monthly allowance which should not be exceeded.

Patients should be reviewed annually to assess; weight and height, review symptoms, assessment of diet and adherence to the gluten free diet/need for GF prescribing and consider the need for specialist dietetic and nutritional advice. Range and types of food may need to be altered

Table 1 – Maximum units

Age and sex	Maximum number of units / month
Child under 10 years	8
Child 11-18 years	12
*Female 19 years and older	8
Male 19 years and older	12

*Breastfeeding and 3rd trimester pregnancy - add 1 unit for 3rd trimester pregnancy) and up to 4 units during breastfeeding

The maximum number of monthly units will be required in exceptional cases only. For example, 12 units of bread would be nearly 5kg of bread per month. The average UK male consumes just under 3kg per month.

Table 2 - Units per item type

Prescribable food item	No. of units
400g bread	1
100 – 250g rolls / baguettes	0.5
251 – 400g rolls / baguettes	1
500g bread mix / flour mix / mixes	2

Prescribing Notes

1. GF foods vary from brand to brand. What may be suitable and taste good to one person may not necessarily suit another. On initial diagnosis, it is best for the person to be advised to [contact the producers of GF food](#) for the samples of their items and purchase items from local retailers. This will let the patient identify the preferred palatable items. Once the person's preferences have been established, relevant items can be provided by the clinician, noting that not all products may be available via the NHS. Signposting to the Coeliac UK website is also beneficial for support and information about the condition. Coeliac UK have an [app](#) that can help with purchases and travel.
2. Only GF items on a GP clinical system should be provided as this ensures all items are ACBS approved. Providing products via NHS prescription which are on the 'blacklist' breaches NHS 'terms of service at pharmacies'.
3. Supply is recommended at 4 weeks at a time for all people. The potential for waste should be considered and reasonable quantities prescribed. The food provided is solely for those with coeliac disease, not for other family members as unless they have a diagnosis of CD or DH there is no need to "remove gluten from a household".
4. People with CD and DH in England are not exempt from prescription charges, unless they are exempt for another reason. People will usually need to pay a separate prescription charge for each item of GF food if provided on a prescription. Buying a pre-payment certificate (PPC), which covers the cost of all items on prescriptions (including medications), could save money. Information regarding current PPC costs and forms can be obtained from a pharmacy or NHSBSA website, see [link](#) .

