

Information leaflet on gluten-free products

What's changing?

People in Hertfordshire with coeliac disease or dermatitis herpetiformis will no longer be prescribed gluten-free foods like bread, pasta and flour mixes.

Does this change affect everyone?

The new policy applies to everyone, including those who get free prescriptions. Clinical exceptions are for people with a learning disability who do not have a carer to help them manage their diet or people with safeguarding concerns.

Why will gluten-free foods no longer be prescribed?

We reviewed and updated our policy for prescribing gluten-free foods after a consultation in the summer (July to September 2017) on a proposal to stop these foods being prescribed. The vast majority of people who responded to our consultation supported the proposal.

This new policy is part of a package of measures we are taking to help make best use of NHS resources. Gluten-free foods can be bought easily without a prescription from most pharmacies and supermarkets.

Are gluten-free products that I buy in shops and online the same quality as those on prescription?

Yes – by law foods can only be labelled gluten-free if they have extremely low levels of gluten. The label is a sign that these foods are suitable for a gluten-free diet and will be of similar quality to the products the NHS has been buying.

I cannot afford to buy gluten-free foods as I am on a low income. How will the change affect me?

Patients on a low income will no longer get gluten-free foods on prescription because this policy applies to everyone living in Hertfordshire, including those who get free prescriptions. This includes:

- People with a medical or maternity exemption
- Children under 16 and adults over 60
- People receiving income-related support

You can access a *Gluten-free diet on a budget leaflet* from Coeliac UK's website: www.coeliac.org.uk/gluten-free-diet-and-lifestyle/food-shopping/gluten-free-diet-on-a-budget/. Further information and advice is also available from NHS Choices at www.nhs.uk/conditions/Coeliac-disease/

If I can no longer get gluten-free foods on prescription how will I manage my coeliac disease?

You can manage coeliac disease by excluding foods from your diet that contain gluten. Gluten is a protein that's found in wheat, rye and barley for example. There are plenty of foods that don't contain gluten.

Further information and advice about following a gluten-free diet is available on the NHS choices website at www.nhs.uk and from Coeliac UK's website www.coeliac.org.uk.

Which foods are naturally gluten-free?

There are a wide variety of foods which you can eat that are naturally gluten-free such as fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, fresh meat, fresh fish, fresh poultry, eggs, milk, rice, fresh potatoes, pulses and beans.

Where can I buy gluten-free products?

Most supermarkets sell gluten-free foods at competitive prices in-store and online. You can also buy pharmacy-only brands from pharmacies without a prescription.

Where can I get support?

Patients with coeliac disease are entitled to request an annual review with their GP. Coeliac UK offers excellent support for patients who need to adhere to a gluten-free diet by helping you to manage your diet and keep up-to-date with the latest developments. Visit their website at www.coeliac.org.uk or contact the local group at southherts@coeliac.org.uk.

How will this policy change affect people who have coeliac-type symptoms but have not yet been tested or diagnosed?

Gluten-free foods have only been available on prescription for people who had a confirmed diagnosis of coeliac disease or dermatitis herpetiformis.

For more information you can contact us on hvccgpatientfeedback@nhs.net, 01442 898865 or visit our website www.hertsvalleysccg.nhs.uk.