

Gluten-free Foods: A Guide to Prescriptions

- Gluten-free foods available on prescription include bread / rolls, crackers & crispbreads, flour mixes, pasta and pizza bases. Xanthan gum for use in baking is also available on prescription.
- The maximum amount of gluten-free food to be prescribed per month is dependent upon the age and gender of the coeliac patient (see table below)
- A patient order form for gluten-free foods is available [Patient Order Form](#)
- Additional gluten-free foods are available to purchase in the 'Free From' range in supermarkets, in health food shops and via the internet

Diagnosis

The ACBS indications for prescribing gluten free products are for the following conditions only:

- Established gluten-sensitive enteropathies including steatorrhea due to gluten sensitivity
- Coeliac disease
- Dermatitis Herpetiformis

A limited range of gluten and wheat free foods can be prescribed for people with established gluten sensitive enteropathies with coexisting established wheat sensitivity (BNF section A2.6.1.1).

Quantities which can be prescribed

In line with guidance from Coeliac UK the following amounts of gluten free foods should be prescribed.¹ This gives a recommended number of units per month and is based on nutritional requirements, age, gender, how active the person is and whether they are pregnant or breastfeeding.

| Age group | Number of units per month |
|--|---------------------------|
| Child 1-3 years | 10 |
| Child 4-6 years | 11 |
| Child 7-10 years | 13 |
| Child 11-14 years | 15 |
| Child 15-18 years | 18 |
| Male 19-59 years | 18 |
| Male 60-74 years | 16 |
| Male 75 years and over | 14 |
| Female 19-74 years | 14 |
| Female 75 years and over | 12 |
| Breast feeding | Add 4 units |
| 3 rd trimester of pregnancy | Add 1 unit |

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Additional units can be prescribed for patients with individual needs if recommended by a dietician

Gluten-free food items which can be prescribed

| <u>Prescribable food item</u> | <u>No. of units</u> |
|---|---------------------|
| 400g bread, rolls, baguettes, flat breads | 1 |
| 500g flour or mix | 2 |
| 150g – 200g crackers / crispbread | 1 |
| 500g oats | 1.5 |
| 250g pasta | 1 |
| 2 x 110-180g pizza bases | 1 |
| 100-170g xanthan gum | - |

In January 2011, Coeliac UK issued a statement that they cannot make a special case for supporting prescribing of biscuits and cake mixes.² They are not staple foods and their use is not consistent with healthy eating recommendations. In line with this, **cakes, cake mixes and sweet biscuits should not be prescribed** but are available for purchase at supermarkets and other retail outlets such as health food shops or some pharmacies.

The range of gluten free products available for prescription is listed in Part XV of the Drug Tariff (Borderline Substances). Brands and products not listed in the Drug Tariff should not be prescribed.

Prescriptions should be for a maximum of 56 days supply only and not exceed the recommended number of units for the patient per month.

Additional information

Coeliac disease is unique among gastro-intestinal disorders in that an effective dietary treatment is available that will restore almost all patients to full health, and help to protect against the development of complications.

The best way to ensure good health is for the patient to adhere to a strict gluten-free diet for life. Adherence to the diet is often perceived by patients to be restricting and many patients find strict compliance difficult. Difficulties however, can mostly be overcome by providing patients with good, sensible and practical advice.

It has been clearly shown that good dietary compliance is aided by the ease with which patients can obtain suitable amounts of gluten-free products. Coeliac disease is a disorder readily treated by diet and every effort should be made to ensure that patients understand this and have access to gluten-free products suitable for their needs.

It is also apparent that those patients who are regularly reviewed adhere much better to their gluten diet than those who are left to their own devices.

Further information can be found on the Leicestershire Nutrition and Dietetic Service Website

www.lnds.nhs.uk

References

1. Gluten free foods: a revised prescribing guide 2011. Available at www.coeliac.org.uk/revisedprescribingguideline2011 accessed on 17th January 2013
2. Coeliac UK position on gluten-free prescribing. Available at www.coeliac.org.uk/healthcare-professionals/prescriptions accessed on 17th January 2013.

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| Version | Section | Description of amendments | Date | Author / amended by |
|---------|------------|--|--------|---------------------|
| 2.1 | Quantities | Removed high physical activity 4 units entitlement as now not in Coeliac UK guidance Added that dieticians can recommend extra units for patients | Aug 13 | HH |
| | | Removed references to breakfast cereals on prescription as most people buy supermarket versions Stated that xanthan gum can be prescribed | | |
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