

**From Joe Brogan, Assistant Director of Primary Care, Head of Pharmacy and Medicines Management**



**By email**

Chief Executives of HSC Trusts  
(for distribution to: Medical Directors -  
*for cascade to all relevant staff*)  
Directors of Nursing (*for cascade to all  
relevant staff*)  
Heads of Allied Health Professions (*for  
cascade to all relevant staff*)  
General Medical Practices (*for cascade  
to all practice staff including locums*)  
Glynis McMurtry Professional Head of Pharmacy  
GP Federations (*for cascade to GPPs*)  
Community Pharmacists (*for cascade  
to all staff including locums*)

**Strategic Planning and Performance Group**

Gransha Park House  
15 Gransha Park  
Clooney Road  
Derry  
BT47 6FN

Tel: 028 9536 3375  
Email: [joe.brogan@hscni.net](mailto:joe.brogan@hscni.net)  
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Dear Colleagues,

**REMINDER OF GLUTEN FREE PRESCRIBING GUIDANCE**

I wish to confirm that prescribing policy, with regards to gluten-free products, in Northern Ireland remains unchanged. The Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) continue to endorse Coeliac UK Guidance for prescribing i.e. only staple foods should be prescribed (as per Table 1). Please find below a link to Coeliac UK prescribing guidelines recommending quantities to be supplied via prescription.

<https://www.coeliac.org.uk/information-and-support/coeliac-disease/once-diagnosed/prescriptions/how-much-should-be-prescribed/?&&type=rfst&set=true#cookie-widget>

Table 1: Gluten-free foods with Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances (ACBS\* approval)

Bread mix/flour mix
Bread/rolls/baguettes
Breakfast cereals
Oats
Pasta
Pizza bases
Savoury biscuits/crackers
Xanthan gum

It is recognised that many GP practices have spent considerable effort reviewing their patients on gluten-free products to ensure that prescribing is in line with this guidance. I would like to note appreciation for the efforts that have been made in this area, which has clarified and appropriately optimised the products being supplied via Health Service prescription. This has helped in ensuring that there is a consistency in approach to the prescription of gluten free foods.

It is well documented that adherence to a gluten-free diet is essential for patients with confirmed gluten-sensitive enteropathies e.g. coeliac disease, in the prevention of long-term complications such as osteoporosis or other conditions. To that end the SPPG continues to support the following with regards access to gluten free foods on prescription:

1. All patients should have a confirmed ACBS\* recognised diagnosis (coeliac disease, dermatitis herpetiformis or steatorrhea due to gluten sensitivity).
2. Quantities supplied via prescription should follow recommendations as per Coeliac UK guidance at link above
3. A maximum of one month's supply should be prescribed at a time.
4. Only staple foods (Table 1) should be supplied on prescription as per Coeliac UK guidance. Items which are not consistent with healthy eating advice such as biscuits, cakes, muffins, pasties, sausage rolls should not be supplied on health service prescriptions (HS21). A list of prescribable products is available on the [Coeliac UK website](#)

#### **Action**

- Practices are encouraged to review their prescribing of gluten-free foods to ensure that it falls within these recommendations if this has not been completed recently.

If you have any queries regarding this please contact your local Pharmacy Adviser.

Yours sincerely,



**Joe Brogan**  
**Assistant Director of Primary Care**  
**Head of Pharmacy and Medicines Management**

\*ACBS – The Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances recommends products on the basis that they may be regarded as drugs for the treatment of specified conditions. Prescriptions issued in accordance with the committee's advice should be endorsed "ACBS".