

## 1. What exactly is proposed to change?

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) released a formal government response in February 2018 on the 'Availability of gluten-free foods on NHS prescription' to nationally restrict gluten-free prescribing to bread and mixes only. This was informed by feedback received from a period of national public consultation in early 2017.

With national guidance clarified, Wiltshire CCG wants to engage with the public, patients and clinicians on what this means for people in Wiltshire.

Currently, Wiltshire GPs are able to prescribe gluten-free foods to patients who have been diagnosed with coeliac disease and/or confirmed dermatitis herpetiformis, with the following guidance:

- Gluten-free prescribing should focus on enabling people with coeliac disease to access gluten-free staple foods, (bread, bread mix, flour, flour mix and pasta) free of charge on NHS prescription, as part of a healthy balanced diet.
- Sweet biscuits and cakes should not be prescribed based on the grounds of supporting healthy lifestyles and the fact that gluten-free products are available at competitive prices in supermarkets.
- Any gluten-free foods prescribed for patients without a confirmed diagnosis should not be prescribed.

Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group is engaging with the public, patients and clinicians on two options that will change the prescribing approach to gluten-free foods in Wiltshire.

The two options are:

**Option A:** End the prescribing of all gluten-free foods in primary care

**Option B:** Restrict gluten-free prescribing to bread and mixes only for those patients with a diagnosis of Coeliac Disease and/or confirmed dermatitis herpetiformis up to the age of 18 years.

## 2. How long will you be seeking peoples' views on these options?

We will be seeking views from patients, the public and clinicians for 4 weeks. The survey is open until 22 July 2018.

## 3. Who will be affected by these proposed changes?

People who have been diagnosed with coeliac disease and/or dermatitis herpetiformis, or are over the age of 18 and have been receiving gluten-free foods on prescription will be affected by this change.

## 4. What is coeliac disease and dermatitis herpetiformis?

Coeliac disease is caused by a reaction of the immune system to gluten and affects at least 1 in 100 people in the UK and Europe; however, only about 24% of people with the condition are currently clinically diagnosed.

Dermatitis herpetiformis (DH) is the skin manifestation of coeliac disease and it affects around 1 in 3,300 people. It can appear at any age, but is most commonly diagnosed in people aged 50-69 years.

### **5. Why are you proposing this change?**

Gluten-free prescribing began in the 1960s when no gluten-free foods or products were available in supermarkets. Nowadays gluten-free products are widely available in supermarkets, shops and cafes – including across Wiltshire – and competition has driven these prices down meaning they are much more accessible to those who have been advised to follow a gluten-free diet by their GP.

Other local CCGs have already reduced, or stopped prescribing of gluten-free foods.

The NHS has a limited prescribing budget and a duty to use its resources wisely. During 2017/18, Wiltshire CCG spent £241,487 on gluten-free foods on prescriptions. Changing our approach to gluten-free prescribing will lead to savings which can be spent on other required health services.

### **6. What are the risks of the options recommended to change the prescribing of gluten-free food?**

There are always risks associated with any change and we understand that it is important to minimise them wherever possible.

By proposing to recommend to stop or to reduce the prescribing of gluten-free foods, there is a risk that some patients, particularly people with learning disabilities, dementia or mental health problems may have difficulty managing their coeliac condition and may experience health problems as a consequence.

It is important that carers for such patients understand the importance of following a gluten-free diet and are supported to do so.

### **7. Will you be offering extra support and help for people with coeliac disease who it is proposed will no longer receive gluten-free foods on prescription?**

We will continue to support patients who have been diagnosed with coeliac disease through our GP practices, community dietetics services and gastroenterology departments.

We will ensure GPs, dieticians and gastroenterologists are advised of the proposed options for change so that they are able to identify potential risks to vulnerable patients.

Coeliac UK is also able to support and provide advice to patients with coeliac disease and dermatitis herpetiformis who are having difficulty maintaining a gluten-free diet: [www.coeliac.org.uk](http://www.coeliac.org.uk)

### **8. Is Wiltshire CCG following national prescribing guidance?**

Patients with coeliac disease and/or dermatitis herpetiformis are reviewed each year in line with the NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) guidelines. These guidelines can be found here: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/conditions-and-diseases/digestive-tract-conditions/coeliac-disease#pathways>

### **9. If, following the proposal, I no longer get gluten-free foods on prescription, how will I manage my coeliac condition?**

Following a gluten-free diet can be achieved by avoiding foods which naturally contain gluten. Gluten-free foods are widely available in supermarkets and shops and competition between these products has driven the prices down over the years.

You can also seek advice and support from your GP, community pharmacy and dietician. Check out the information and resources on the Coeliac UK website: [www.coeliac.org.uk](http://www.coeliac.org.uk)

**10. If I struggle to maintain a gluten-free diet without prescribed foods, what should I do?**

If you are having difficulty maintaining a gluten-free diet, please seek advice and support from your GP, community pharmacy and dietician. Coeliac UK also has a lot of useful resources, information, recipes and contacts on their website: [www.coeliac.org.uk](http://www.coeliac.org.uk)

**11. I cannot afford to buy gluten-free foods as I am on a low income. Is it proposed that I will continue to receive gluten-free foods on prescription?**

People who have been diagnosed with coeliac disease and/or dermatitis herpetiformis, or are over the age of 18 and have been receiving gluten-free foods on prescription will be affected by this change.

Following a gluten free diet can be achieved without resorting to specially formulated foods on prescription, by avoiding foods which naturally contain gluten. You can also seek dietary advice from the community dietetics services or your GP practice.

You can also find recipes and tips for managing a gluten-free diet on the Coeliac UK website - [www.coeliac.org.uk](http://www.coeliac.org.uk)

**12. How will this proposed change affect people who have coeliac-type symptoms but have not been tested or diagnosed?**

These proposed options will not directly affect people who have not been diagnosed with coeliac disease and/or dermatitis herpetiformis as the NHS should not be prescribing gluten-free foods for patients without a confirmed diagnosis.

People who have been diagnosed with coeliac disease and/or dermatitis herpetiformis, or are over the age of 18 and have been receiving gluten-free foods on prescription will be affected by this change.