

To:

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

Allied Health Professionals - for cascade to all relevant staff

General Medical Practices (for cascade to all practice staff including GP locums)

Community Pharmacists (for cascade to all pharmacy staff including locums)

For information:

Chief Executive of Coeliac UK

Coeliac UK local groups in NI

Dear Colleague

Re: Prescribing of Gluten-Free Foods

The need to provide clarity regarding the availability and quantity of certain foods has been highlighted and in November 2011 I wrote to all GP practices to endorse the Coeliac UK guidance as a tool for initiating prescribing and also for reviewing patients currently prescribed gluten-free foods on HS21.

The most recent version of the Coeliac UK guidance can be accessed at:

<https://www.coeliac.org.uk/gluten-free-diet-and-lifestyle/food-on-prescription/>

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. This has helped in ensuring that there is a consistency in approach to the prescription of gluten free foods and in particular:

- Prescribing takes account of healthy eating messages and promoting prescribing of gluten-free staple foods (thereby eliminating unnecessary prescribing of cakes, biscuits etc.)
- The quantities prescribed are within dietary recommendations

I would like to note my appreciation for the efforts that have been made in this area which has clarified and appropriately optimised what is being supplied via Health Service prescription.

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 HSCB 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 steatorrhoea due to gluten sensitivity).
2. Quantities supplied via prescription should follow recommendations as per Coeliac UK guidance available at: http://www.coeliac.org.uk/sites/files/coeliac/a5_prescribing_guidelines_hires_for_print_and_web_june12_1.pdf
3. A maximum of one month's supply should be prescribed at a time.
4. Only staple foods 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 NHS prescription (HS21).

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

The HSCB has a tool that practices may wish to use to review their gluten-free prescribing. This is available on the Primary Care Intranet:

http://primarycare.hscni.net/PharmMM_Resources_Clinical%20Resources.htm#Nutrition

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

Yours sincerely

Joe Brogan

**Assistant Director of Integrated Care –
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”.