

Community Pharmacy Gluten-Free Food (GFF) Service

What is this new Service?

From February 2014, both adult and paediatric patients with a confirmed diagnosis of either **Coeliac Disease or Dermatitis Herpetiformis** will be able to benefit from a community-pharmacy based Gluten-Free Food (GFF) Service. This is a National initiative introduced by Scottish Government.

What are the benefits to patients of the Gluten-Free Food Service?

The GFF Service allows patients to self-manage their gluten free prescription with the help of community pharmacy rather than General Practice. Patients on the GFF Service are provided with an allocation of gluten free units free of charge which meets their nutritional needs. They then select gluten-free food items up to this unit allocation and take their order direct to their community pharmacy. This system also allows the patient more variation in their diet as the Service allows them to make changes to their gluten-free order on a monthly basis. Products are chosen from the local Health Board Formulary of Prescribable Gluten-Free Foods. Not having to visit their General Practice to alter gluten-free food products has been found to save the patient time. Patients will have regular contact with their community pharmacist who will assist with their order if required and be their point of contact.

As part of the Gluten-Free Food (GFF) Service, community pharmacists are also required to undertake and record a Pharmacy Annual Health Check with **ADULT** Coeliac Disease patients following a discussion with the patient. This process ensures that the evidence-based Coeliac Disease guidelines are being met. BMIs may be calculated, adherence to diet assessed and therapy interactions and adverse effects investigated. This will allow patients to be signposted to relevant health professionals if appropriate, often with a referral letter.

What are the benefits to General Practice of the Gluten-Free Food Service?

Patients have the choice to be part of the GFF Service or continue to obtain their gluten-free prescriptions from their General Practice. For those patients who do register with the GFF service then General Practice is still medically responsible for the medical aspect of their care but NOT their gluten-free prescriptions. This has been found to save valuable General Practice time and administration resources. The Pharmacy Annual Health Check provided in community pharmacy for ADULT Coeliac patients has also been found to be useful as it ensures patients undergo a health check annually (in accordance with evidence-based guidelines) and **only** those with a clinical need are referred back for the necessary medical management.

How does a patient register with the Service?

Patients are currently eligible to use this new Service if they have Coeliac Disease or Dermatitis Herpetiformis and are registered with a Scottish GP practice. Patients who are care home residents are excluded. To register, a Patient Registration Form (e-mailed to each GP practice and also available from your Health Board) should be

partially completed by the patient's GP and taken to the pharmacy from which the patient wishes to receive their gluten-free foods.

As a GP what will I have to do?

You can identify and inform your patients with **Coeliac Disease or Dermatitis Herpetiformis** of the new National Gluten-Free Food Service. If a patient would like to use the Service, you should partially complete the one-off Patient Registration Form, noting the number of GF units your patient should receive on a monthly basis. This information can be identified below using the nationally agreed gluten-free unit allocation or you can use the unit allocation that was provided by the patient's dietitian. When the patient initially registers with the Service, please supply a prescription in the normal way **for one month's supply of products** to allow time for the Service to be set up for the patient.

A **new** Patient Registration Form should also be completed by the GP if:

- A patient moves house and requires to change their community pharmacy
- A change in the agreed GFF Service units is required (e.g. if the patient moves into a new age bracket).

Qualifying patients who do NOT wish to opt into the Service and ineligible patients will continue to access prescriptions from their GP as at present.

If a patient is referred back to General Practice after the Pharmacy Annual Health Check, then action should be taken by General Practice to investigate any issues that pharmacists have identified as concerns.

How many gluten-free units should I prescribe for a patient?

There are national recommendations for the number of gluten-free units patients can order each month, which vary by age and gender. The amount of gluten-free units patients are given, should meet their individual dietary needs.

Below are the national recommendations of gluten-free units per month based on age and sex:

Age and Sex	Units per Month
1-3 years	10
4-6 years	11
7-10 years	13
11-14 years	15
15-18 years	18
Male 19-59 years	18
Male 60-74 years	16
Male 75+ years	14
Female 19-74 years	14
Female 75+ years	12
Breastfeeding	+4
3 rd trimester of pregnancy	+1

If a patient feels they need more than these recommendations, you may wish to refer your patient to a dietitian or as per local Health Board policy.

Where can I get more information?

Coeliac UK is a major source of support and information for both patients and healthcare professionals (Registration is free to healthcare professionals). Their professional helpline is particularly useful. It is worthwhile encouraging your patients to join or rejoin.

The address is:

Coeliac UK,
1 Saint Colme Street,
Edinburgh, EH3 6AA.
Telephone: 0131 220 8342

Coeliac UK,
3rd Floor,
Apollo Centre,
Desborough Road,
High Wycombe,
Buckinghamshire, HP11 2QW

Professional Helpline 0845 305 2060

<http://www.coeliac.org.uk>

More detailed information of the community-pharmacy based GFF Service is available at www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/pharmacy.

More detailed information on the management of Coeliac Disease is available:-

1. As a module on BMJ learning- <http://group.bmj.com/products/learning>.
2. As an EU-funded training resource http://www.aoecs.org/news_item.php?id=-19&&news_id=80
3. Via NHS Inform <http://www.nhsinform.co.uk/health-library/articles/c/coeliac-disease/introduction>.

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