

# WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

**Issue Date:** 17 January 2019

**STATUS:** ACTION

**CATEGORY:** HEALTH PROFESSIONAL LETTER

**Title:** Changes to the availability of gluten free (GF) foods for the treatment of coeliac disease on prescription in England – Implications for Wales

**Date of Expiry / Review** This Welsh Health Circular remains in force until such time as it is replaced.

**For Action by:**  
Chief Pharmacists; Community Pharmacists;  
General Practitioners; and Dispensing Doctor  
Practices

**Action required by:**  
24 January 2019

**Sender:** Pharmacy and Prescribing Branch, Health and Social Services Group

**HSSG Welsh Government Contact(s) :**  
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**Enclosure(s):** CPhO Letter

WHC/2019/001

Dear Colleague

**CHANGES TO THE AVAILABILITY OF GLUTEN FREE (GF) FOODS FOR THE TREATMENT OF COELIAC DISEASE ON PRESCRIPTION IN ENGLAND – IMPLICATIONS FOR WALES**

**Purpose**

1. To inform you that, further to the changes to the availability of gluten free foods for the treatment of coeliac disease on prescription in England which came into force on 4 December, the current policy of prescribing gluten-free (GF) foods in Wales will remain the same until otherwise advised. We will, over the next 12 months, scope out options for securing expert advice on the prescribing and supply of gluten free products for the longer term. The list of GF foods in the Drug Tariff as at the end of November 2018 will be retained with no new products added until this work has been concluded. A further WHC will be issued at that time.

**Background**

2. Following a consultation in 2017, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has made amendments to the National Health (General Medical Services Contracts) (Prescription of Drugs etc.) Regulations 2004 to restrict prescribing to gluten free bread and mixes only. The amendments are applicable to England only.

3. Whilst the changes to regulations affect England only, the Drug Tariff, which sets out what can and cannot be supplied against an NHS prescription, applies to England and Wales. The implications of the changes are that the Drug Tariff (Part XV) is updated to show only a reduced list of GF bread and mixes for England and there is an additional section (Part XVIII A) advising which further items may be prescribed in Wales.

4. The ACBS is responsible for advising the NHS on the prescribing of foodstuffs and toiletries which are specially formulated for use by people with medical conditions. This includes determining which GF products should be incorporated in the Drug Tariff.

**From the Chief Pharmaceutical Officer**

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**WHC/2019/001**

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5. Given the changes to policy on prescribing GF foods in England, the role of ACBS will change, meaning it will no longer be possible for it to consider the wider range of GF foods available on prescription for Wales and other devolved nations. ACBS will also not consider any new non-bread or GF products.

6. Due to the fact that the volumes of new, and amendments to, GF food is low, the latest Drug Tariff listing for GF foods at the end of November 2018 has been 'frozen'.

### **Action**

7. To note the above and that the prescribing position in Wales remains unchanged with products listed in the Drug Tariff at November 2018 continuing to be prescribable.

8. In the event that IT software identifies a GF product as being on the list of items which cannot be prescribed solely because its use is restricted in England, prescribers, community pharmacy contractors and dispensing doctor practices should check that the product is listed in the relevant section of the Drug Tariff, and therefore allowed by NHS Wales. If this is the case, then any restriction indicated can be disregarded.



**Andrew Evans**  
**Chief Pharmaceutical Officer for Wales**