

Public consultation on the proposed changes to NHS prescriptions for gluten-free bread and flour in Lincolnshire.

18 March – 13 May 2025

Get Involved

If you would prefer to speak to a member of our team about your experience/s, or if you need support in completing the survey, require an alternative format/s, require the survey in another language or you require the services of an interpreter, please contact the Engagement Team at Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board via email - licb.involveus@nhs.net or mobile: 07811 701278.

If you would prefer to complete this questionnaire online, please visit: [Preview - Public consultation on the proposal to stop providing NHS prescriptions for gluten-free products](#)



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Lithuanian: Jei norėtumėte gauti informaciją kitakalba ar formatu, kreipkitės į mus.

Polish: Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub innym formacie, prosimy dać nam znać.

Portuguese: Se deseja obter informação noutra idioma ou formato, diga-no.

What are we asking for your views on?

The Lincolnshire NHS is proposing a change in the availability of gluten-free bread and flour on prescription.

Currently, we provide our patients, including those diagnosed with coeliac disease and dermatitis herpetiformis, with up to eight units of gluten-free bread or flour on prescription a week. This is taken up by approximately 800 people across Lincolnshire.

For the reasons outlined below, we are reviewing the prescribing of gluten free products in order that we might safely limit the volume of prescriptions. This means that for as many people as safely possible we would stop prescribing gluten free products altogether (though for any people for whom this change would not be clinically safe, we would continue to support prescriptions). Before we make a final decision, we wish to understand what this means for people and their families. Please read this further information about the proposals before completing the survey [Preview - Public consultation on the proposal to stop providing NHS prescriptions for gluten-free products](#) or contact us if you would like a paper copy licb.involveus@nhs.net or mobile: 07811 701278.

About coeliac disease and dermatitis herpetiformis

Gluten-free foods are sometimes prescribed to individuals who suffer from coeliac disease and/or dermatitis herpetiformis.

Coeliac disease is a long-term autoimmune condition, where the immune system mistakenly attacks healthy tissue. The immune system mistakes substances found inside gluten as a threat to the body and attacks them, which damages the surface of the small bowel, disrupting the body's ability to absorb nutrients from food. Symptoms can range from mild to severe and can include bloating, diarrhoea, nausea, weight loss, headaches, osteoporosis, tiredness, hair loss and anaemia. These symptoms do not occur in all cases. It can also cause more general symptoms which impact on health, for example tiredness and unintentional weight loss.

Dermatitis herpetiformis is a skin condition associated with coeliac disease and gluten intolerance, which occurs as an itchy skin rash that commonly appears on the elbows, knees and buttocks. This affects around one in 3,300 people.

Coeliac disease and dermatitis herpetiformis are usually treated by excluding foods that contain gluten. All sources of gluten must be given up for life from a coeliac's diet to prevent long-term damage to their health.

Why we are proposing this change

Accessibility of gluten-free foods

Historically, the availability of gluten-free foods was limited; therefore, the foods were made available from local pharmacies via prescriptions. Today gluten-free foods are widely available at competitive prices in almost all major supermarkets.

Bread and bread mixes are not the only way to get essential nutrients in your diet.

If you have coeliac disease or dermatitis herpetiformis, you must stop eating all sources of gluten for life, however it's possible to eat a balanced gluten free diet without the need for any special dietary foods. This proposal is about stopping prescribing of bread and flour, and although these are a source of key nutrients, it is possible to obtain these from other naturally gluten free foods e.g. brown rice, potatoes, whole grains, leafy green vegetables to achieve a healthy diet.

Increased awareness and improvements to food labelling

Better labelling on foods means that people are better able to see whether ordinary foods are free from gluten.

Affordability

We do appreciate that gluten-free food is relatively more expensive than equivalent products containing gluten. However, when prescribing gluten-free foods the NHS pays both for the food plus the additional cost of processing the items, with prices paid by the NHS for gluten-free foods up to 4 times more expensive than the buying it directly from a supermarket or online supplier.

Eat well

It is possible to eat a gluten-free diet that follows the Eat Well Guide [The Eatwell Guide - NHS](#) for balanced eating without the need for any specialist dietary foods. People can choose naturally gluten-free carbohydrate-containing food, such as rice and potatoes, as part of a healthy balanced diet. It is therefore possible to avoid the cost of gluten-free foods entirely.

Waste reduction and financial savings

Prescriptions for gluten free bread and bread flour currently cost Lincolnshire £230,000 per year. Lincolnshire ICB proposes to limit prescribing of gluten free staple products to clearly defined specific groups. This decision will deliver cost-saving benefits, reduce waste and free up clinical and pharmacy time to provide other services.

Our proposal

We are asking for your views on whether we should do the following unless there are exceptional circumstances:

- Stop all prescribing of gluten-free bread and flour with no replacement system
- Limit the prescribing of gluten-free bread and flour to clearly defined specific groups

Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board (ICB), the organisation that plans and pays for local services and medications, wants to find out how it can support those who have a diagnosis of coeliac disease and/or dermatitis herpetiformis.

Please complete the questionnaire to tell us how you may be affected by this proposal or to share your thoughts on the topic. The consultation closes on 13 May 2025.

Responses to this survey will be received by NHS Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board and will be kept confidential under the Data Protection Act 2018

What happens next?

The results of the public consultation do not represent a vote on, or a veto over any form of change. The outcome of the consultation is an important part of the decision making and will be fully considered alongside other essential factors such as clinical, financial and practical considerations. Any decision to proceed with the proposed service changes is dependent on the outcome of the consultation and any subsequent decisions taken by the NHS Lincolnshire ICB Executive Team.