

Prescribing...

Nutritional Products

- ✚ The cost in Guernsey and Alderney, excluding fees, of all prescribed oral nutritional products, foods and health supplements was £547,000 in the twelve months to February 2011, an increase of over 15% on the previous twelve months.
- ✚ The average cost of each item was £40.52.
- ✚ Evidence from elsewhere is that, despite everybody's best efforts, avoidable wastage of these products can occur relatively easily.
- ✚ Some UK Primary Care Organisations have reduced cost growth without affecting patient care in any way by simply prescribing these products on **acute prescriptions only**.

What is the current situation ?

This is a very expensive area of prescribing, with each item costing over £40, compared with roughly £7 for each cardiovascular prescription item!

Local prescribing by the main organisations was as follows.

Practice	Cost in 2009	Cost in 2010	% Change
Dr Cooper	£18,114	£20,949	+16%
Dr Lyons	£3,786	£6,012	+59%
MSG	£16,847	£14,863	-12%
L'Aumone & St Sampsons	£125,448	£138,926	+11%
Healthcare	£135,086	£166,507	+23%
QRMP	£137,204	£156,864	+14%

What is the latest advice on sip feeds?

Advice from the Prescribing Support Unit and HSSD's Dietetic Department on the use of these products is as follows

- Sip feeds should only be prescribed for patients with disease-related malnutrition, mal absorption states or other clinical conditions requiring fat and carbohydrate supplementation. Ideally they should be initiated on the advice of a dietician.
- The patient's weight or BMI should be recorded in the notes.
- **Use acute prescriptions only** and do please continue to prescribe them by brand.
- Remember that sip feed treatments normally lasts for a maximum of three months.
- Always check which flavour (s) the patient would prefer.
- Offer advice on improving diet at the same time.
- If difficulty swallowing is the main presenting problem, consider referring to a dietician or a speech and language therapist for expert advice.

Practices with Scriptswitch will soon have messages to this effect.

What about gluten-free foods ?

These products should only be prescribed to patients with a confirmed diagnosis of coeliac disease. They should never be given to patients with who simply believe they have an intolerance to wheat, without any supporting evidence. When GF foods are prescribed, good nutritional practice should be borne in mind. Therefore it is not appropriate to prescribe large quantities of cakes and biscuits. Gluten-free products are not wheat-free and use should be reviewed annually.

2009 PBAC guidance, based on the advice of Dr Lynne Harbottle, former Consultant in Nutrition at HSSD on the recommended monthly gluten-free food prescription quantities is as follows.

Age Group	Suggested Number of Units * per Month	Example monthly prescription
Adult Male 19-59 years	18	10 x 400g loaves of bread (or 5 x 500g mix suitable for making bread) plus 1 x 500g pasta , plus 1x 200g biscuits plus 1 x 500g flour mix plus 1 box pizza bases plus 2 x 200g crackers/crispbreads plus 1 x 500g flour mix
Adult Male 60+ years	14-16	10 x 400g loaves of bread (or 5 x 500g mix suitable for making bread) plus 1 x 500g pasta , plus 1x 200g biscuits plus 1 x 500g flour mix plus 1 x 500g cake mix plus 1 x 200g crackers/crispbreads plus 1 x 500g sweet biscuits
Adult Female 19-74 years	14	8 x 400g loaves of bread (or 4 x 500g mix suitable for making bread) plus 1 x 500g pasta , plus 1 box pizza bases plus 2 x 200g crackers/crispbreads plus 1 x 500g flour mix
Adult Female 75+ years	12	6 x 400g loaves of bread (or 3 x 500g mix suitable for making bread) plus 1 x 500g pasta , plus 1x 200g biscuits plus 2 x 200g crackers/crispbreads plus 1 x 500g cake mix

*One unit of gluten-free food is equivalent to, for example, a 400g loaf of bread, 200g biscuits or 250g of pasta. Items can be interchanged e.g. bread mixes can be interchanged with rolls or loaves.

And finally

Prescribable natural products such as St John's Wort and Glucosamine are only available as extremely expensive "specials". NICE TAs on OA and depression **do not recommend** their use. These products are however available to buy at very reasonable prices if their use is unavoidable for whatever reason.

Please contact me if you would like any more information.

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