

Freshwell Low Carb Programme at Colne Valley PCN - FAQs for referrers



The PCN is delighted that our local GPs, nurses, and health care assistants are increasingly referring patients to the Freshwell Low Carb Programme at Colne Valley PCN. We have compiled this list of FAQ for our referrers (also see the [Freshwell Low Carb Project](#) website for more information):

What can the Health and Wellbeing Coach (Low Carb) help patients with?

The PCN Health and Wellbeing Coach (Low Carb) talks to patients about their health goals, and recent A1c test if appropriate. She will give time for patients to tell their story (30min 1:1 appointments) and focus on motivating patients to take steps to improve their health and wellbeing. She will raise awareness of the opportunities and benefits available from taking part in the Freshwell Low carb programme and answer questions about this. If patients would like to proceed or find out more, she will send them a local 'getting started guide' and give them an opportunity to book a check in support call to review progress. She will also introduce them to our local low carb community Facebook group and drop-in meetings and events. Her focus is on supporting people to self-manage and make informed choices, rather than giving individualised dietary advice. She will however signpost to relevant additional resources and websites where appropriate.

Should I refer a patient with type 2 diabetes needing clinical support for de-prescribing?

From 1st August 2023, our PCN Pharmacist Team will be available for assistance with de-prescribing low carb patients from any Colne Valley PCN member practice. This means that from 1st August, you will be able to refer patients with Type 2 Diabetes who are taking any diabetes medication (including insulin). Please refer them in the usual way and our PCN Health & Well-being team will liaise directly with our PCN pharmacist team. They will be supported by Freshwell GP, Dr Kim Andrews, GPwSI Diabetes and they will be sticking to a protocol devised by Kim. For additional information and protocols on this please email Sharon.withnell@nhs.net in the first instance.

Should I refer a patient who has been advised to eat a 'low-fat' diet?

The Freshwell Low Carb approach recommends that people looking to lose weight or reduce blood sugars do not need to fear eating natural fat (including saturated fat), with an emphasis on eating real, unprocessed foods. Our experience is that participants' lipid profiles significantly improve, rather than get worse by taking this approach.

See: [Saturated Fats and Health: A Reassessment and Proposal for Food-Based Recommendations: JACC State-of-the-Art Review | Journal of the American College of Cardiology](#)

Also see: <https://nutrition.bmj.com/content/early/2023/01/02/bmjnph-2022-000544>

It is not realistic to ask a patient to stick to a diet that is both low carb and low fat. It can also be confusing for the patient if they are given contradictory advice. Therefore, as a referring clinician, if you or your patient feel that it is a priority for them to eat a low-fat diet, then clearly this is entirely up to you, but in such cases please do not refer your patient to the low carb programme.

Alternatively, if you are concerned about the consequences to a patient's lipid profile from following the Freshwell Low Carb advice, you could consider repeating their lipid profile after 12 weeks of dietary modification and see the results for yourself.

Should I refer a patient who has been advised to eat ‘little and often’?

The Freshwell approach recommends that people looking to lose weight or reduce blood sugars start by reducing their carbohydrate intake by focusing on real foods, and then as a next stage to reduce the frequency of eating to help maintain lower blood sugar levels and endogenous insulin levels. The Freshwell Low Carb approach embraces Time Restricted Eating and Intermittent Fasting as a very useful adjunct. Therefore, if a patient is being advised to eat ‘little and often’ at the same time as a referral then this can be confusing for them. If the patient is happy to adopt our approach, then please do refer them.

Should I refer a patient who has been advised to eat plenty of wholegrains e.g. porridge for breakfast?

The Freshwell Low Carb approach recommends that people looking to lose weight or reduce blood sugars reduce starchy carbohydrates in their diet to decrease blood sugars and the release of insulin. Wholegrains including oats feature on our ‘red list’ of foods to avoid where possible, with recommendations for obtaining fibre from other less starchy foods such as vegetables, nuts, non-tropical fruits, and beans. Therefore, if a patient is being advised to eat e.g. porridge for breakfast, at the same time as referral, then this can be confusing for them. If the patient is happy to adopt our approach, then please do refer them.

Should I recommend that patients count calories and carbs?

The Freshwell Low Carb approach puts an emphasis on the quality of foods, rather than counting carbs or calories. We recommend that patients don’t count anything (at least initially), and instead concentrate on eating the right sort of food, which tends to lead to less hunger and therefore easier appetite control. Calorie intake naturally tends to reduce as a result. There can be times when counting carbs or looking at portion sizes can be useful, for example, if a patient’s weight loss has stalled. We don’t encourage patients to count calories.

Should I refer a patient to the Freshwell Low Carb Programme at the same time as referring them to the Diabetes Education/ Diabetes Prevention Programme?

We suggest referring to one programme only at a time. The Freshwell Low Carb Digital Resources are QISMET accredited as providing structured diabetes education. Referring to two different programmes at once can be confusing for the patients as they may be receiving conflicting advice.

What codes should I use for referral?

The Freshwell Low Carb Programme at Colne Valley PCN has been recognised by Essex County Council as a Tier 2 weight management programme and a claim can be made for weight management referrals. It is also an accredited supplier of structured diabetes education, so by signposting to our resources you are entitled to tick the QOF DM014 box for “structured diabetes structured education” referrals. Please follow your practice procedures for this.

How do I refer to the Freshwell Low Carb Programme at Colne Valley PCN?

You have a few options (more info on how to do these on request to Sharon.withnell@nhs.net) :

- Remote book to the PCN low carb ledger
- Send a task to Sharon Withnell (select ‘for PCN’ in top corner of task screen)
- Use the S1 referral form

- Use the referral form on the [webpage](#) (patients can also choose to self-refer or access resources independently)

Who is eligible to refer?

Any patient with a BMI of over 25 and / or a diagnosis of pre-diabetes or type 2 diabetes is eligible. Patients should also be motivated to make lifestyle changes to improve their health outcomes. If patients are unmotivated to try low carb and / or they are looking to access tier 2 services simply as a stepping-stone to tier 3 weight loss services, then please consider using an alternative service.

What if they are not sure about low carb?

Please do refer anyone looking to lose weight or reduce blood sugars who is motivated to make changes, particularly if they have failed previously using other standard methods. All patients have an initial 30-minute call which can be used for them to explore all their options and decide on their next steps. They can choose not to partake at any stage if they so wish.

What is the current waiting time?

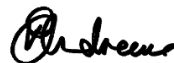
Patients are usually given an appointment time, an opportunity to re-book this if necessary, and a link to the Freshwell App within a day or two of referral. Wait time for an appointment is currently around 2 weeks but a second health and wellbeing coach is currently being recruited to improve waiting times.

Any other questions?

Please email our health and wellbeing coach (low carb) Sharon.withnell@nhs.net, Dr David Oliver (davidoliver1@nhs.net) or Dr Kim Andrews (kim.andrews@nhs.net)



Dr David Oliver



Dr Kim Andrews

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