

Dispensing Factsheet: Charges and Exemptions

This factsheet outlines what pharmacy teams need to know about prescription charges and exemptions.

1. When should you collect a prescription charge?

	English pharmacy	Welsh pharmacy
English prescription	Collect prescription charges according to English rules	Collect prescription charges according to English rules, unless the patient also presents a Welsh prescription charge entitlement card
Welsh prescription		No prescription charges
Scottish prescription		
Northern Irish prescription	No prescription charges	

2. Is the patient exempt from the prescription charge?

As part of a pharmacy's Terms of Service, pharmacy staff must ask any person who makes a declaration that the patient is exempt from paying a prescription charge to produce satisfactory evidence of such entitlement (see Eligibility for Exemptions box below).

The legislative requirement is set out in paragraph 7 of the Terms of Service, which is available here: tinyurl.com/pharmacyterms.

If a patient is unsure whether they are entitled to free prescriptions, pharmacy staff should advise the patient to pay for their prescription and issue them with an FP57 Refund form (available from your local Area Team) with information on how to claim a refund at a later date. Further information for patients can be found at nhs.uk/healthcosts.

3. Eligibility for Exemptions

Part XVI of the Drug Tariff (Notes on Charges) sets out the categories of people who are entitled to exemption or remission from the prescription charge. A person eligible for exemption from the NHS prescription charge is any patient who:

- is under 16
- is aged 16, 17 or 18 and in qualifying full-time education (please note apprenticeships do not qualify for free prescriptions, but those on them may be able to get a HC2 Charges Certificate)
- is aged 60 or over
- has a valid:
 - Maternity Exemption Certificate
 - Medical Exemption Certificate
 - Prescription Pre-payment Certificate
- has or is included in the award of someone who has:
 - a current HC2 Charges Certificate (please note a HC3 Certificate only provides partial help and this does not cover prescription costs)
 - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA/IB)
 - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA-IR)
 - Universal Credit
 - a valid NHS Tax Credit (TC) Exemption Certificate
 - Income Support (IS)
 - Pension Credit Guarantee Credit (PCGC)
- is a war pensioner holding a War Pension Exemption Certificate and the item is for the accepted disablement
- is a prisoner on release (see prescription requirements in Payment Factsheet 2: Prescription Switching which can be found at psnc.org.uk/switching)



4. If the patient is not exempt, how much should they pay?

The NHS Prescription Charge in England is currently set at £8.05 per item (correct as of Nov 2014); the Department of Health reviews this annually with any changes coming into effect on the 1st April each year. Unless the patient claims one of the allowed exemptions, the rules on the following page apply to determine how many charges are payable.

Single prescription charge applies:

Scenario	Example of ONE charge (if written on same prescription)
The same drug or preparation is requested to be supplied in more than one container.	<i>Chloramphenicol 0.5% eye drops 10ml x 2</i>
Different strengths of the same formulation of a drug on the same prescription form.	<i>Warfarin 1mg tablets x 28 Warfarin 3mg tablets x 28 Warfarin 5mg tablets x 28</i>
More than one appliance of the same type and specification (other than elastic compression hosiery*).	<i>Open-Wove bandages 1 x 2.5cm Open-Wove bandages 1 x 5cm Open-Wove bandages 1 x 7.5cm</i>
A set of different components making up a complete appliance.	<i>Activa Leg Ulcer Hosiery Kit</i>
Drugs in a powder form prescribed with a separate diluent (e.g. water for injections).	<i>Amoxil 500mg powder for injection x 1 Water for injection 5ml ampoules x 1</i>
A drug which needs to be supplied with a dropper, throat brush or vaginal applicator.	<i>Estriol 0.01% cream Vaginal applicator type 1</i>
Several flavours of the same preparation.	<i>Ensure Plus Fibre liquid banana Ensure Plus Fibre liquid strawberry</i>
A medicine which is supplied with an appliance which is not listed in Part IX but is necessary for the drug's use (see Part XVI, Clause 12.11, Drugs Packed with Non Drug Tariff Appliances).	<i>Emla 5% cream 5g + 2 dressings (previously known as the "pre-medication pack")</i>

Multiple prescription charges apply:

Scenario	Example of TWO charges
Different drugs, types of dressings or appliances prescribed on the same prescription form.	<i>Absorbent lint BPC 25g Absorbent cotton BP 1988 25g</i>
Different formulations or presentations of the same drug.	<i>Prednisolone 1mg tablets Prednisolone 2.5mg gastro-resistant tablets</i>
Additional components supplied together with a complete set of apparatus or additional dressing(s) together with a dressing pack.	<i>Dressit sterile dressing pack Crepe bandage 1 x 7.5cm</i>
More than one piece of elastic compression hosiery*.	<i>1 pair Thigh Stockings – Class II Black</i>

*anklet, legging, knee cap, below knee, above knee or thigh stocking.

5. Exception: Contraceptives

Part XVI, Clause 10 of the Drug Tariff sets out the arrangements for charging of contraceptives. Prescriptions for the following items are automatically exempt from prescription charges:

- spermicidal gels, creams, films and aerosols
- systemic contraceptive preparations listed in Part XVI
- contraceptive devices listed in Part IXA of the Drug Tariff.

However, there are some products, such as co-cyprindiol 2000mcg/35mcg tablets, which whilst they do **not** appear in Part XVI, are sometimes used for contraceptive purposes. In this scenario, if the doctor has endorsed the prescription with "**CC**", "**OC**" or the female symbol (♀) to make it clear that the item is for contraceptive use, the patient should not incur a prescription charge.

Further details on free of charge contraceptives and products attracting more than one charge can be found on PSNC's Multi Charge Card, available at psnc.org.uk/chargecard.

6. Resources

Guidance on which prescriptions can be dispensed on the NHS: psnc.org.uk/prescriptionforms.

More details such as proof required for exemptions entitlement and contact details psnc.org.uk/exemptions.

Prescription charge refund guidance: psnc.org.uk/refunds.

More information on 'switching': psnc.org.uk/switching.

The latest downloadable versions of our Prescription Charge Card and Multi Charge Card: psnc.org.uk/charges.

"How many charges" examples can be found in the notes on charges **Part XVI, Clause 12 of the Drug Tariff**.

Order free resources to promote the Prescription Prepayment Certificate (poster HC20; leaflet FP95) from Area Teams. Patients can get information on certificates from the helpline: **0300 330 1341**.