

Payment Factsheet 2: Prescription Switching

Prescriptions are no longer automatically switched from 'exempt' status to 'paid' by the Pricing Authority. Any form that is identified as a potential candidate for switching is now referred to an operator to assess the prescription and make the final decision over whether the prescription should be 'switched'.



1. Why switching occurs

Prescription switches generally occur at the Pricing Authority for 2 main reasons:

- i. The declaration on the back of an exempt prescription has not been completed correctly by the patient.*
- ii. A paid prescription has been incorrectly filed with exempt prescriptions by the pharmacy, before submission.

These prescriptions will be switched from exempt to paid by the Pricing Authority and prescription charges will be deducted for each item.

**The declaration on the back of a prescription form must be completed on all occasions except where:*

- the patient is under 16 or over 60 and a computer-generated date of birth is printed on the prescription
- the patient is a prisoner on release where the practice address box on the front of the form includes the printed letters 'HMP' along with the issuing prison address and NHS England Area Team allocated number
- the prescription is a 'Bulk' Prescription (i.e. for two or more patients, see Drug Tariff Part VIII A, Note 9)

Further information on prescription charges and exemption categories can be found at psnc.org.uk/charges

The Department of Health will not grant any further concessions for a pharmacy's failure to ensure exemption declarations are completed where required; therefore it is essential that **all contractors review their prescription receipt and processing procedures.**

2. TOP TIPS: How to Prevent Prescriptions from Being Switched

- Check the back of every exempt prescription (ideally when handing over the medication to the patient) to ensure that:
 - an exemption box in part 1 of the declaration has been clearly marked (for example tick or cross)
 - the 'amount paid' box in part 2 of the declaration has not been obscured/ marked
 - there is a signature in the signature box (part 3) of the declaration

(this is especially important when a patient is signing multiple prescriptions at a time)
- Ensure that all prescriptions are filed correctly in the paid or exempt sections at the end of every day.
- If possible, double-check exempt prescriptions for misfiled paid prescriptions before submission at the month end.
- **Please note:** a pharmacy stamp is not accepted as a signature in a declaration of exemption. If a prescription is submitted without a valid signature in part 3, it could be switched.
- You do not need to use a particular coloured pen to complete exemption declarations; this has no impact on whether an item is switched.

Prescription switching statistics can be found on page 2 of your FP34 Schedule of Payments. It details the number of switches made by the Pricing Authority and the reasons why. It is important to monitor this closely, for example to ensure that staff are following prescription receipt SOPs and ensuring exemption declarations are completed correctly, where required.

For the most up to date information, please visit the **PSNC website:** psnc.org.uk/cip