

# Guidance on dispensing prescriptions for unlicensed medicinal products

Pharmacy contractors have raised concerns about dispensing prescriptions for unlicensed medicinal products at a loss because some have been prescribed incorrectly using EPS. To minimise the risk of dispensing at a loss, PSNC has issued the following guidance on prescriptions for unlicensed medicinal products issued electronically.

Over the past year, pharmacy teams have seen an increase in the number of drugs affected by shortages or supply issues where the only available recommended alternatives are unlicensed products.

Where a licensed product is unavailable and the prescribing of an unlicensed import/specials is considered appropriate by the prescriber, a prescription must be issued with the correct product selected by the prescriber to indicate that a special is required.

## Prescribing of unlicensed specials and imports EPS

A prescriber must select the appropriate Actual Medicinal Product (AMP) on their prescribing system to allow pharmacy teams to supply and be reimbursed for dispensing a special.

In EPS, a prescription for a special would read:

- **'Drug name (Drug Tariff Special Order)'** – for a Part VIII B listed special or
- **'Drug name (Special Order)'** – for a non-Part VIII B special; or
- **'Drug name (Imported (Country))'** – for an unlicensed import.

promptly issue electronic prescriptions for unlicensed products so that pharmacists can procure and dispense the required product, avoiding delays in getting the correct medication to patients and ensuring contractors are reimbursed accordingly. If the product is not listed on dm+d, a prescriber will need to issue a handwritten **paper FP10** prescription for the unlicensed product written as **'Drug name (Special Order)'**.

### EPS prescribing errors

It is important to note that if a prescriber adds free-typed supplementary information such as 'Special' into a different EPS field for example, as part of the dosage instructions or 'additional instructions', this will not be taken into account for reimbursement purposes as this information is not captured by the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) during processing.

*Example of an **incorrectly** issued electronic prescription for an unlicensed product*

NHS Number:		NHS NUMBER
Prescribed Medication	DISPENSING TOKEN	
Phenelzine 15mg tablets 60 tablets 2 tablets per day. <b>Please supply unlicensed special</b>		

For guidance on the inclusion of product information within the dosage area see [psnc.org.uk/dosearea](https://psnc.org.uk/dosearea). Pharmacy teams may need to refer to this guidance during discussions with a prescriber to help explain that an EPS prescription needs to be cancelled and re-issued with the correct AMP selected (where listed) or that a replacement paper FP10 form needs to be issued to ensure that it can be accurately priced by the NHSBSA.

### Paper FP10 prescriptions

As mentioned above, where a prescriber is unable select and issue an electronic prescription for an unlicensed product via EPS, they would need to issue a **paper FP10** prescription written as **'Drug name (Special Order)'**. The wording '(Special Order)', must be included in the first line of the prescribed product as part of the drug name to ensure NHSBSA can reimburse the item correctly.

Paper FP10 prescriptions for unlicensed products must be correctly endorsed and placed in the red separator for end of month submission. See our [Unlicensed specials and imports](#) page for guidance on endorsing EPS and paper FP10 prescriptions.

*Example of a **correctly** issued electronic prescription for an unlicensed product*

NHS Number:		NHS NUMBER
60/60 Ex-xx/pack Manufacturer ABC1234 Batch No SP	Prescribed Medication	DISPENSING TOKEN
	Phenelzine 15mg tablets (Special Order) 60 tablets 2 tablets per day	

For technical reasons, not all items can be issued via EPS because:

- a required product may not be listed within the NHS Dictionary of Medicines and Devices (dm+d), or
- the prescribing systems may not be able to generate a prescription because the prescribing system supplier has not 'mapped' across the appropriate codes.

Following recommendations for prescribers to consider prescribing of unlicensed alternatives as indicated on the published Medicine Supply Notifications or Supply Disruption Alerts, PSNC has urged the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to consider the addition of new 'Special Order' or 'Imported' AMP's to dm+d in parallel to facilitate the electronic prescribing of unlicensed products. With nearly 90% of all prescriptions now issued via EPS, this would allow prescribers to