

# All you need to know about: Special containers and products requiring reconstitution

There are special requirements and reimbursement arrangements for dispensing products which are recognised as being packaged in special containers or those requiring reconstitution. This factsheet will take you through what these special requirements are and how your payment can be affected.



## Special container status

A product is granted special container status in cases where it is not practical to split a pack, for example where the product is sterile or hygroscopic. A product can be classed as special container in its complete original pack size or in its sub-pack size (for example a tablet blister strip).

Where the quantity of a product ordered by the prescriber does not coincide with that of an original pack size and the product is considered a special container (as a complete pack or sub-pack size), contractors are required to supply the special container or combination of containers nearest to the quantity ordered and endorse the prescription form with the number and size of these containers. Where the quantity ordered falls exactly between two containers, contractors should round down, and supply the nearest complete container.

## Criteria of special containers and products requiring reconstitution

Part II Clause 10 B of the Drug Tariff outlines the following criteria which needs to be met for a product to be granted special container status. Where the quantity ordered by the prescriber does not coincide with the of an original pack and the drug or chemical reagent is:

- Sterile
- Effervescent or hygroscopic, or
- a. Liquid preparations for addition to bath water
- b. Coal Tar preparations
- c. Viscous external preparations
- Packed in a castor, collapsible tube, drop-bottle, pressurised aerosol, puffer pack, roll-on-bottle, sachet, shaker, spray, squeeze pack, container with an integral means of applications or any other container form which it is not practicable to dispense the exact quantity:

the contractor shall supply in the special container or containers the quantity nearest to that ordered and endorse the prescription

form with the number and size of those containers. Where the quantity ordered falls exactly between two containers, contractors should **round down**, and supply the nearest complete container.

Payment for the nearest complete pack or number of packs also applies to antibacterial, antiviral or antifungal preparations listed in 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 (except 5.3.1) of the British National Formulary (BNF), which are for oral administration and requires reconstitution from granules or powder. Part II Clause 13 of the Drug Tariff states that:

*“when the quantity reconstituted from an original pack or packs is unavoidably greater than the quantity ordered and it has not been possible for the contractor to use the remainder for or towards supplying against another prescription, payment will be calculated from the Basic Price of the preparation and will be based on the nearest pack or number of packs necessary to cover the quantity ordered”.*

Please note that the phrase “*necessary to cover*” is interpreted as the amount dispensed must allow the patient to complete the full course of medication prescribed. Therefore, if a product matching the above description is required to be reconstituted, contractors will be paid based on number of packs required to cover the quantity prescribed.

## Difference between Part II Clause 13 (RECONSTITUTION OF CERTAIN ORAL LIQUIDS) and special container rules

Where the quantity ordered falls exactly between two containers, the rounding down rules do not apply to eligible oral anti-infective products which require reconstitution. This is because where the quantity of a liquid antibiotic, for example, reconstituted from granules or powder, is unavoidably greater than the quantity ordered and it is not possible for the contractor to use the remainder of the reconstituted product to fill another prescription, the contractor should supply enough packs necessary to cover the quantity ordered and will be reimbursed based on the nearest pack or number of packs necessary to cover the quantity ordered.



## Identifying products which have been marked as special containers

Products classed as special containers in Part VIII of the Drug Tariff are marked with a small black square (■) next to the drug name, for example:

Perindopril arginine 10mg tablets ■ 30 1065 C *Coversyl Arginine*

Eligible products for oral administration which require reconstitution from granules or powder are marked with a small black circle (●) next to the drug name in the Drug Tariff, for example:

Amoxicillin 125mg/5ml oral suspension sugar free ● 100 ml 156 △ M

*examples taken from June 2020 Drug Tariff'*

To confirm the status of a product not listed in the Drug Tariff, you can check the NHS Dictionary of Medicines and Devices browser (dm+d) browser which is updated weekly (every Thursday) by the NHSBSA. Alternatively, dispensing system supplier should automatically prompt users as to which products which are classed as special container and indicate the number of packs (or sub-packs) to dispense. Check with your system supplier on the frequency of dm+d system updates which should ideally be done weekly in line with NHSBSA's scheduled weekly update. PSNC also maintains a special container database which is updated on a monthly basis and can be found at: [psnc.org.uk/SCdatabase](https://psnc.org.uk/SCdatabase).



### Dispensing the exact prescribed quantity if it is different to the special container pack size

Where the quantity ordered does not coincide with that of the special container pack size you are required to supply the nearest complete pack or sub-pack(s) nearest to the quantity ordered.

### Exceptions to the rules around quantity to supply for special containers

In a small number of cases, where there is an over-riding clinical requirement to dispense the exact quantity ordered rather than the nearest complete pack or sub-pack size (for example, if the drug is required to be packaged into a weekly compliance aid of if there is a risk that the patient may misuse the drug), pharmacists would need to assess the clinical appropriateness of splitting the pack to dispense the exact quantity bearing in mind the impact on the stability of the drug once removed

from its original packaging. There may be patient safety issues to consider if a pharmacist decides to dispense the exact quantity ordered (if not a multiple of the sub-pack size).

For example, if a hygroscopic drug is not stored and used correctly, exposure to moisture could affect the integrity of the drug by potentially decreasing its stability and/or efficacy.



### Special container endorsements

For products classed as special containers, pharmacy teams are required to endorse the prescription form with the number and size of the containers used to dispense from.

### Products requiring reconstitution endorsements

With regards to items requiring reconstitution, NHSBSA will automatically flag any eligible items as special containers and therefore reimbursement will be calculated automatically based on the nearest number of packs required to cover the quantity ordered. This will occur even if resulting liquid is not of limited stability as the stability of the liquid does not affect the quantity to be reimbursed.

Pharmacy teams are advised to endorse the amount of packs supplied to enable the patient to complete the full course of medication prescribed.

In cases where there is a clinical requirement to dispense the exact quantity of a product ordered rather than the nearest pack size, to protect against any suggestion of fraud, the contractor should dispense the prescribed quantity and endorse the prescription form clearly with the quantity supplied and the pack size used.

### Special container status updates

Following a review, DHSC has re-determined a number of products now meet the special container criteria as set out in Part II Clause 10B of the Drug Tariff. To assist pharmacy teams and provide full visibility, monthly changes to special container status of products will be listed on PSNC's new page: [psnc.org.uk/SCupdates](https://psnc.org.uk/SCupdates)

If you identify any particular product(s) which are not currently classed as special containers but you believe satisfy the criteria, please notify PSNC via [info@psnc.org.uk](mailto:info@psnc.org.uk) who will investigate.