

Factsheet: Free-of-charge (FOC) Items

In this factsheet PSNC's Dispensing and Supply team explains what items are classed as free-of-charge (FOC) when prescribed on NHS prescription forms.

Free-of-charge contraceptives

Prescription charges are NOT payable for drugs used for contraceptive purposes and certain contraceptive appliances (as referenced in Part XVI Clause 10 of the Drug Tariff), when prescribed on NHS prescription forms. Contraceptive drugs listed in Part XVI Clause 10 of the Drug Tariff are automatically identified and processed as free-of-charge (FOC) items by the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA). The same applies to contraceptive devices and applicators listed in the Appliances section (Part IXA) of the Drug Tariff. These items do not need to be annotated for contraceptive use by the prescriber and a prescription charge should not be levied for these products.

Prescriptions for any other drug not specified in Part XVI of the Drug Tariff but intended for contraceptive purposes must be annotated by the prescriber with either 'CC', 'OC' or the female symbol (♀) to indicate that no prescription charge should be levied. For EPS, prescribers need to apply the correct 'CC' endorsement against the drug intended for contraceptive purposes so that it is recognised and processed as a FOC item by the pharmacy and the NHSBSA. Prescribers must not free-type the 'CC' endorsement or similar in the 'free text' fields of the electronic prescription as this information is not extracted by the NHSBSA for reimbursement purposes. If the required prescriber endorsements are absent or are incorrectly written on a prescription for any drug not specified in Part XVI but intended for contraceptive purposes, the usual prescription charges would apply unless the patient holds a valid exemption reason from paying NHS prescriptions charges. For more information see our page on [Exemptions from the prescription charge](#).

List of contraceptive drugs to be dispensed free-of-charge (FOC): (N.B. all forms are tablets unless stated otherwise)

Akizza 75mcg/20mcg	Ethinylestradiol 35microgram / Norethisterone 1mg	Mestranol 50mcg / Norethisterone 1mg
Akizza 75mcg/30mcg	Etonogestrel 68mg implant	Microgynon 30
Ambelina	Evra transdermal patches	Microgynon 30 ED
Bimizza	Ezinelle 1.5mg	Millinette 20mcg /75mcg
Brevinor	Feanolla	Millinette 30mcg /75mcg
Cerazette	Femodene	Mirena 20mcg/24hours intrauterine device
Cerelle	Femodene ED	Moonia
Cilique	Femodette	Nexplanon 68mg implant
Cimizt	Gedarel 20mcg /150mcg	Norethisterone 200mg/1ml solution for injection ampoules
Depo-Provera 150mg/1ml suspension for injection pre-filled syringe	Gedarel 30mcg /150mcg	Norethisterone 350mcg
Depo-Provera 150mg/1ml suspension for injection vials	Jaydess 13.5mg intrauterine device	Norgeston
Desogestrel	Katya	Noriday
Desomono	Kyleena 19.5mg intrauterine device	Norimin
Desorex	Levest 150/30	Norinyl-1
Dretine	Levonelle 1500	Noristerat 200mg/1ml solution for injection ampoules
Elevin	Levonelle One-Step	Nuvaring vaginal delivery system
Ellaone	Levonorgestrel 1.5mg	Ovranette
Eloine 0.02mg/3mg	Levonorgestrel 13.5mg intrauterine device	Qlaira
Emerres 1.5mg	Levonorgestrel 19.5mg intrauterine device	Rigevidon
Emerres Una 1.5mg	Levonorgestrel 20mcg/24hours intrauterine device	Sayana Press 104mg/0.65 ml suspension for injection pre-filled disposable devices
Estradiol 1.5mg / Nomegestrol 2.5mg	Levonorgestrel 30mcg	Sunya
Ethinylestradiol 2.7mg / Etonogestrel 11.7mg vaginal delivery system	Levosert 20mcg / 24hours intrauterine device	Synphase
Ethinylestradiol 20mcg / Desogestrel 150mcg	Lizinna	SyreniRing 0.12mg/0.015mg per day vaginal delivery system
Ethinylestradiol 30mcg / Desogestrel 150mcg	Logynon	TriRegol
Ethinylestradiol 20mcg / Drospirenone 3mg	Logynon ED	Upostelle
Ethinylestradiol 30mcg / Drospirenone 3mg	Lucette	Yacella 0.03mg /3mg
Ethinylestradiol 20mcg / Gestodene 75mcg	Maexeni	Yasmin
Ethinylestradiol 30mcg / Gestodene 75mcg	Marvelon	Yiznell 0.03mg /3mg
Ethinylestradiol 30mcg / Levonorgestrel 150mcg	Medroxyprogesterone 104mg/0.65ml suspension for injection pre-filled disposable devices	Zelleta 75mcg
Ethinylestradiol 33.9mcg/24hrs / Norelgestromin 203mcg/24hrs transdermal patches	Medroxyprogesterone 150mg/1ml suspension for injection vials	Zoely
Ethinylestradiol 35mcg / Norgestimate 250mcg	Melkine	Spermicidal Contraceptives
	Mercilon	Gygel 2% contraceptive jelly
		Nonoxinol-9 2% gel

List of contraceptive appliances (devices) to be dispensed free-of-charge (FOC):

Intrauterine Contraceptive Devices		Vaginal Applicators
Ancora 375 Cu Copper T380 A Flexi-T 300 Flexi-T+380 GyneFix Load 375 Mini TT380 Slimline Multiload CU 375 Multi-Safe 375 Neo-Safe T380	Nova-T 380 Novaplug T 380 Ag (Normal, Mini) Novaplug T 380 Cu (Normal, Mini) Optima TCu380A Steriload T-Safe 380A QL TT380 Slimline UT380 Short UT380 Standard	Estriol vaginal applicator type 1 Vaginal applicator type 1
		Vaginal Contraceptive Caps (Pessaries)
		FemCap 22mm, 26mm and 30mm Vaginal contraceptive cap silicone 22mm, 26mm and 30mm

‘FS’ endorsement for ‘Free Supply’

Prescribers can apply the ‘FS’ (for ‘free supply’) prescriber endorsement against certain items to indicate that a charge should not be levied for the endorsed item(s). Currently the ‘FS’ endorsement is only approved for use by prescribers to enable FOC supply of sexual health treatments.

Any item prescribed for the treatment on a sexually transmitted infection (STI) must be endorsed with ‘FS’ by the prescriber in order not to attract a prescription charge. The ‘FS’ endorsement, if applied correctly, will indicate to pharmacy teams that a patient who normally pays for their prescriptions should not be charged for any items correctly endorsed ‘FS’ by the prescriber. There is no defined list of drugs for STI to which the ‘FS’ prescriber endorsement can be applied to; prescribers should use their clinical discretion to determine when to apply the ‘FS’ endorsement when prescribing items for treatment of STIs.

In EPS, the ‘FS’ endorsement must be present in the prescriber endorsement field. The ‘FS’ endorsement should **NOT** be manually added by a prescriber to the free-text EPS dosage area or notes field as this information is not visible to the NHSBSA during prescription pricing. If an electronic prescription is received with the prescriber ‘FS’ endorsement contained within the dosage area, the prescriber should be contacted for a replacement prescription with the ‘FS’ endorsement applied correctly. See psnc.org.uk/dosearea.

Prescribers should **NOT** include ‘FS’ endorsed items on the same prescription form as other chargeable items. For electronic prescriptions with ‘FS’ endorsed items only, the message code ‘Y’ (0017) can be populated before an EPS claim is submitted for payment (some PMR systems may automatically apply this code if only ‘FS’ endorsed items are prescribed). If the ‘FS’ prescriber endorsement cannot be correctly applied to applicable items on electronic prescriptions, prescribers should revert to issuing paper prescriptions with ‘FS’ endorsed manually against each item intended for the treatment of an STI.

On paper FP10 prescription forms, the initials ‘FS’ and the prescriber’s signature should be annotated by hand alongside the item being prescribed for STI treatment. There is no patient tick box for FOC sexual health treatments on the reverse of the paper FP10 prescriptions/FP10DT tokens. **Paper prescriptions for ‘FS’ endorsed must be placed in the exempt red separator before a prescription bundle is submitted for payment to ensure that operators at the NHSBSA can identify and process ‘FS’ endorsed items as FOC.**

FAQs

Q. What does a patient pay for a prescription that has both a contraceptive and another item on it?

A. Ideally, prescribers should not include items classed as FOC (for e.g. contraceptives) on the same prescription form as a chargeable item. Where such prescriptions are received, the table below highlights whether a patient would pay a prescription charge using different examples of contraceptive-containing prescriptions:

Patient status	Prescription for		
	Contraceptive only (FOC)	Contraceptive + other FOC items (such as an ‘FS’ endorsed item)	Contraceptive + chargeable item
Exempt from prescription charges	No charge	No charge	If a patient has a valid exemption from prescription charges, the actual reason for exemption should be selected. The contraceptive will be automatically treated as an FOC item.
Pays for prescriptions	No charge	No charge	Patient pays for the chargeable items only. Any contraceptives are automatically treated as FOC and no prescription charges should be levied for these.

FAQs (continued)

Q. Why are patients with STIs entitled to receive their treatment for free on the NHS?

A. Existing legislation under the NHS Act 2006 provides for free-of-charge treatment for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Many patients often receive treatment for STIs free-of-charge from local sexual health (GUM) clinics. Where these treatments for STI are supplied by way of an FP10 prescription form, there is currently no mechanism or operational arrangement for exempting the patient from the prescription charge, so patients may be charged for medicines that should be supplied for free. The 'FS' endorsement has been developed as a technical solution to allow free supply of items used for the treatment of STIs.

Q. How should contractors process prescriptions with 'FS' only items and mixed items ('FS' and non-FS) for both exempt and non-exempt patients?

A. The table below highlights how to process prescriptions with 'FS' only items and mixed items ('FS' and non-FS) for both exempt and non-exempt patients

Patient status	Items on prescription	Patient declaration and prescription submission guidance
	'FS' item(s) only	Paper: No patient tick box on the new versions of the paper FP10 form and Token. The form must be placed in a red separator with the exempt section in the end of month prescription bundle.
		EPS: Submit message code 'Y' (0017) for "was prescribed free-of-charge STI sexual health medication"
Not exempt from prescription charges	'FS' item and other FOC item e.g. contraceptives <i>Note: FOC 'FS' endorsed items (e.g. for treatment of an STI) should NOT be included on the same prescription form as items for which a prescription charge is usually applicable.</i>	Paper: No patient tick box on the new versions of the paper FP10 form and Token. The form must be placed in a red separator with the exempt section in the end of month prescription bundle.
		EPS: Use code 'X' (0010) for "was prescribed free-of-charge contraceptives"; OR Submit message code 'Y' (0017) for 'was prescribed free-of-charge STI sexual health medication'
	'FS' item and other chargeable items <i>Note: FOC 'FS' endorsed items (e.g. for treatment of an STI) should NOT be included on the same prescription form as items for which a prescription charge is usually applicable.</i>	Paper: The prescription form or Token must be signed with a declaration applied to clearly indicate the total amount of prescription charges collected. The form must be placed in a red separator with the chargeable section in the end of month prescription bundle.
		EPS: Select the appropriate prescription message code (0001) to indicate that the patient has paid the appropriate charges and clearly indicate the total amount of prescription charges collected.
Exempt from prescription charges	'FS' item and other chargeable items <i>Note: FOC 'FS' endorsed items (e.g. for treatment of an STI) should NOT be included on the same prescription form as items for which a prescription charge is usually applicable.</i>	Paper: The prescription form or Token must be signed with a declaration applied based on the patient's actual reason for exemption from prescription charges for e.g. medical exemption certificate. The form must be placed in a red separator with the exempt section in the end of month prescription bundle.
		EPS: Select the appropriate message code relating to the patient's actual reason for exemption from prescription charges for e.g. if the patient holds a valid medical exemption certificate use message code 'E' (0006).

For more FAQs related to free-of-charge contraceptives and 'FS' endorsement please see our page [Prescription Charge Card and Free-of-charge \(FOC\) Items and Multi-Charge Factsheets](#)

Please contact the PSNC Dispensing and Supply Team if you any queries relating to no charges items on 0203 1220 810 or email info@psnc.org.uk