

New prescriber endorsement 'FS' for free supply of sexual health treatment

This factsheet explains what the 'FS' prescriber endorsement is, how this endorsement should be applied to paper and electronic prescriptions by prescribers, and how to correctly submit 'FS' endorsed prescriptions for payment.

What is the 'FS' endorsement?

Existing legislation under the NHS Act 2006 provides for free-of-charge (FOC) treatment for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Until now, there was no mechanism or operational arrangement for exempting patients from the prescription charge, where these treatments for an STD were supplied on an NHS FP10 prescription form.

When new versions of NHS prescription forms and EPS Tokens (v.1219) were introduced in England in January 2020, one of the changes made was to introduce the 'FS' prescriber endorsement to enable prescribers to indicate that a product is being prescribed for the treatment of a sexually transmitted infection (STI) and therefore can be provided to the patient FOC on a FP10 form. (Note, [the Department of Health and Social Care \(DHSC\) guidance](#) refers to STIs rather than STDs to be consistent with professional and other guidance, e.g. the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH).)

What does the 'FS' endorsement cover?

The 'FS' endorsement operates by way of guidance, and prescribers should use their clinical discretion when prescribing items for STI treatment, in accordance with their professional duties and obligations.

There is no specific list of drugs to which the 'FS' prescriber endorsements can be applied to. It is considered that only those conditions for which sexual contact is a main route of transmission of an infection should be ordinarily managed as "STI treatment", for example, treatment for chlamydia would be FOC whereas treatment for candidiasis would not. Guidance on STIs that may be suitable for managing in primary care can be found in the guidelines section of the [BASHH website](#) and in the [standards for the management of sexually transmitted infections](#).

Dispensing 'FS' endorsed prescriptions

Paper prescriptions

The initials 'FS' and the prescriber's signature should be annotated by hand alongside the item being prescribed for STI treatment. **'FS' CANNOT be endorsed by the patient or a pharmacist.**



Example of how the 'FS' endorsement should appear on paper FP10 prescriptions:

Metronidazole 400mg tablets **FS A.B**
14 tablets
Take one twice daily

Where a prescriber has endorsed 'FS' against an item on a prescription, the patient does not need to make a declaration and sign the reverse of the FP10 form or provide any evidence of entitlement for FOC STI treatment. This is because legislation does not require a patient, or their representative, to make a declaration or sign a form to receive FOC sexual health medication (or contraceptives).

All paper FP10 prescription with the prescriber 'FS' endorsement should be placed in the **red separator** for end of the month submission.

The NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) will recognise the 'FS' endorsement where it is correctly applied by the prescriber and treat the marked item(s) as FOC accordingly.

Items classed as FOC for the treatment of an STI should NOT be included on the same prescription form as items for which a prescription charge is usually applicable.



EPS prescriptions

The new prescriber 'FS' endorsement is not yet configured into prescribing systems for EPS. Prescribers should therefore revert to issuing paper prescriptions with the 'FS' endorsement manually added against each item intended for the treatment of an STI, until suppliers have made the necessary changes to prescribing systems.

Once configured into EPS, a new message code 'Y' (0017) for "was prescribed free-of-charge sexual health medication" will be available for PMR suppliers to add. For prescriptions which only have 'FS' endorsed items, the message code 'Y' (0017) can then be populated before an EPS claim is submitted for payment (some PMR systems may automatically apply this code if an 'FS' endorsed item is prescribed).

Example of how the 'FS' endorsement should appear on an EPS Token:

Prescribed Medication	DISPENSING TOKEN
Metronidazole 400mg tablets FS 14 tablets Take one twice daily	

The 'FS' endorsement should NOT be manually added to the EPS dosage instructions field as this would not allow

The table below highlights how to treat 'FS' only and mixed prescriptions for both exempt and non-exempt patients, and how to correctly submit these prescriptions for payment.

Patient status	Items on prescription	Patient declaration and prescription submission guidance
Not exempt from prescription charges	'FS' item only	<p>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.</p> <p>EPS: Once configured into EPS and your PMR system, use new message code 'Y' (0017) for 'was prescribed free-of-charge sexual health medication'.</p>
	<p>'FS' item and other FOC item e.g. contraceptives</p> <p><i>Note: Items classed as FOC for the treatment of an STI should NOT be included on the same prescription form as items for which a prescription charge is usually applicable.</i></p>	<p>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.</p> <p>EPS: Use code 'X' (0010) for "was prescribed free-of-charge contraceptives"; or Once configured into EPS and your PMR system, use new message code 'Y' (0017) for 'was prescribed free-of-charge sexual health medication'.</p>
	<p>'FS' item and other chargeable items</p> <p><i>Note: Items classed as FOC for the treatment of an STI should NOT be included on the same prescription form as items for which a prescription charge is usually applicable.</i></p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
Exempt from prescription charges	<p>'FS' item and other chargeable items</p> <p><i>Note: Items classed as FOC for the treatment of an STI should NOT be included on the same prescription form as items for which a prescription charge is usually applicable.</i></p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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).</p>

a pharmacy contractor to supply any treatment for STIs **FOC against NHS prescriptions.** Addition of any free-typed supplementary information to the dosage instruction field or other fields such as 'additional instructions', will not be taken into account for reimbursement purposes as this information is not captured by the NHSBSA during processing. If an electronic prescription is received with the prescriber 'FS' endorsement contained within the dosage area, the prescriber should be contacted to cancel the prescription, and a correctly endorsed prescription re-issued. See psnc.org.uk/dosearea

Prescriptions that include 'FS' endorsed item and chargeable item on the same form

Prescribers should NOT include items classed as FOC on the same prescription form as a chargeable item. If other items that are not FOC are prescribed on the same form, they would be chargeable unless the patient is exempt from prescription charges for other reasons. See psnc.org.uk/exemptions

PMR suppliers can help ease the processing of mixed FOC/non-FOC prescriptions e.g. by auto-populating the right codes. PMR suppliers may consider making such developments based on the direct feedback received from their customers (pharmacy contractors) see: psnc.org.uk/reportIT