

Dispensing Factsheet: Prescriber 'FS' endorsement for free supply of sexual health treatment

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

What is the 'FS' endorsement?

The National Health Service Act 2006 (section 173) provides for free treatment for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)*. Therefore, a technical solution was developed to accommodate a prescriber endorsement 'FS' to enable free supply of sexual health treatment. The 'FS' prescriber endorsement is used by prescribers to indicate that a product is being prescribed for the treatment of a sexually transmitted infection (STI) and therefore to be provided to the patient free-of-charge on an NHS prescription. Therefore, pharmacy teams should ensure that no prescription charge is levied for any 'FS' endorsed items.

*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 treatments does the 'FS' endorsement cover?

There is no specific list of drugs to which the 'FS' prescriber endorsement can be applied. 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 free-of-charge whereas treatment for candidiasis would not. Prescribers should use their clinical discretion for use of the 'FS' endorsement when prescribing items for the treatment of STIs. Guidance on STIs that may be suitable for managing in primary care can be found in the guidelines section of the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH) [website](#) and in [BASHH's Standards for the management of sexually transmitted infections](#).

The 'FS' endorsement can only be added by a prescriber; it CANNOT be added by a patient or a pharmacist.

Dispensing and claiming for 'FS' endorsed prescriptions

Electronic prescriptions with free-of-charge 'FS' endorsed items

Using their prescribing systems, prescribers must select and apply the 'FS' endorsement to electronic prescriptions with any items prescribed for the treatment for STIs. **Prescribers should not free-type the 'FS' endorsement or add any other supplementary product information into the dosage area or additional instructions field as this information is not captured by the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) during prescription pricing.**

If an electronic prescription is received with the prescriber 'FS' endorsement included within the dosage area, the pharmacy should refer the prescription back to the prescriber so it can be re-issued with the endorsement correctly applied. See cpe.org.uk/dosearea



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	

Occasionally mixed prescriptions (containing both free-of-charge and chargeable items) may be issued in error. Prescribing systems should assist prescribers by splitting items onto separate prescriptions where a combination of 'FS' endorsed STI medication (or other free-of-charge items) and other chargeable items are prescribed at the same time. If mixed prescriptions are issued in error, PMR system suppliers may support with the processing of these prescriptions, for example, by auto-populating the appropriate exemption category code. PMR system suppliers may consider making such developments based on the direct feedback received from their customers (pharmacy contractors) see: cpe.org.uk/reportIT

It is **important** to note that Real Time Exemption Checking (RTEC) does not automatically verify the 'FS' endorsement. For electronic prescriptions with **'FS' endorsed items only**, the EPS exemption category message code '0017' for "*Was prescribed free-of-charge STI sexual health medication*" should be populated before the claim is submitted for payment. Please note: some PMR systems may automatically apply the '0017' exemption reason code if an 'FS' endorsed item is prescribed.

For electronic prescriptions with ONLY 'FS' endorsed items, the patient does not need to sign the reverse of the EPS Token or provide any evidence of entitlement to free-of-charge STI treatment. This is because legislation does not require a patient, or their representative, to make a prescription charge exemption declaration by sign a prescription form/EPS token or provide proof of entitlement to receive free-of-charge sexual health medication. The same requirements also apply to NHS prescriptions for contraceptives.

Prescriptions that include free-of-charge 'FS' endorsed item(s) and other chargeable item(s) on the same form.

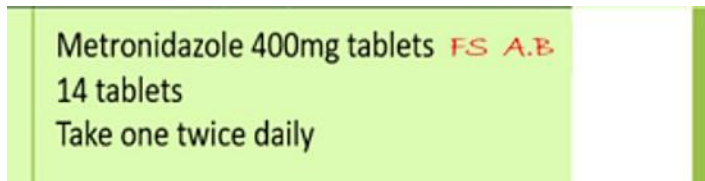
DHSC [guidance](#) states that prescribers should not include items classed as free-of-charge (for e.g. STI treatments endorsed 'FS' and/or contraceptives) on the same prescription form as other chargeable items. This is because there may be a risk of incorrect number of prescription charge deductions being made against such prescriptions if the wrong EPS exemption category is selected. For example, if an EPS prescription includes a free-of-charge 'FS' endorsed item and a chargeable item, and the prescription is submitted with the EPS exemption reason '0017' code selected for "*Was prescribed free-of-charge STI sexual health medication*", a charge deduction will apply to the chargeable item(s) even if the patient was exempt from prescription charges for other reasons, for example, if the patient also had a valid medical exemption certificate. If the patient does not hold a valid exemption reason, only the free-of-charge items should be supplied for free, and charges should be collected for any chargeable items with the reverse of the prescription form/EPS token completed to confirm that a charge was levied for these. See cpe.org.uk/exemptions/. Please refer to **Appendix 1** for information on how to submit claims for electronic prescriptions containing mixed items i.e. both 'FS' endorsed and other chargeable items.



FP10 paper prescriptions

The initials 'FS' and the prescriber's signature should be annotated alongside the item being prescribed for the treatment of STIs. If there are multiple items prescribed for the treatment of STIs, each item must be annotated with the 'FS' endorsement and the prescriber's signature. **The 'FS' endorsement can only be added by a prescriber; it CANNOT be added by a patient or a pharmacist.**

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



There is no requirement in legislation for the patient, or their representative, to sign the NHS prescription form to receive their STI treatment (or contraceptives) free of-charge. As these treatments are free to all, there is no exemption that must be claimed. Therefore:

- If a prescription form contains ONLY free-of-charge items (contraceptives or STI treatment), the patient or their representative, is not required to complete the back of the FP10 paper prescription or sign the form.
- If a prescription contains both free-of-charge items and items for which a charge is levied, and the PATIENT IS NOT EXEMPT from charging, the patient, or their representative, is required to sign the FP10 paper prescription form and complete the amount paid box.
- If a prescription contains both free-of-charge items and items for which a charge is levied, and the PATIENT IS EXEMPT from charging, the patient, or their representative, is required to select the exemption category and sign the declaration to confirm proper entitlement to exemption from charges. A declaration and signature are not needed if the exemption is for those aged under 16 or aged 60 or over and the date of birth (D.O.B) is printed on the FP10 paper prescription form.

All FP10 paper prescriptions with the prescriber 'FS' endorsement must be placed in the **red separator** for end of the month submission. Prescription processing staff at the NHSBSA will look for the 'FS' endorsement on FP10 prescriptions and treat the marked item(s) as free-of-charge.



Appendix 1: Scenarios for handling free-of-charge prescriptions

The table below outlines the correct handling of free-of-charge 'FS' only and mixed prescriptions for patients that usually pay for their prescriptions and for those that hold a valid exemption reason. The table also explains the correct steps to follow when submitting these prescriptions for payment.

Patient status	Items on prescription	Patient declaration and prescription submission guidance
Not exempt from prescription charges	'FS' item only	<p>EPS: No patient tick box on the reverse of EPS Token.</p> <p>Use message code (0017) for 'was prescribed free-of-charge sexual health medication'</p> <p>Note: some pharmacy systems may automatically apply this code if only 'FS' endorsed items are prescribed.</p>
		<p>Paper: No patient tick box on the reverse of paper FP10 form.</p> <p>Prescription must be placed in a red separator with the exempt section in the end of month prescription bundle.</p>
	'FS' item and other free-of-charge item e.g. contraceptives	<p>EPS: Use code (0010) for 'was prescribed free-of-charge contraceptives'</p> <p>or</p> <p>message code (0017) for 'was prescribed free-of-charge sexual health medication'.</p>
		<p>Paper: No patient tick box on the reverse of paper FP10 form.</p> <p>Prescription must be placed in a red separator with the exempt section in the end of month prescription bundle.</p>
	'FS' item and other chargeable items <i>Note: Prescribers should AVOID MIXING free-of-charge items with chargeable items on the same form.</i>	<p>EPS: Select the appropriate prescription message code (0001) to indicate that the patient has paid the appropriate charges.</p>
		<p>Paper: The reverse of paper FP10 form must be signed with a declaration applied to clearly indicate the total amount of prescription charges collected for chargeable items</p> <p>Prescription must be placed in a red separator with the chargeable section in the end of month prescription bundle.</p>
Exempt from prescription charges	'FS' item and other chargeable items <i>Note: Prescribers should AVOID MIXING free-of-charge items with chargeable items on the same form.</i>	<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>
		<p>Paper: The reverse of paper FP10 form 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.</p> <p>Prescription must be placed in a red separator with the exempt section in the end of month prescription bundle.</p>