

Dispensing Factsheet: Free-of-charge items

This factsheet explains what items are classed as free-of-charge (FOC) when prescribed on NHS prescription forms in England.

Introduction

Currently, 89% of NHS prescription items are dispensed in the community free-of-charge. Individuals in England are entitled to free prescriptions if they meet certain exemption criteria including those on low incomes, people with some long-term medical conditions and those who have purchased pre-payment certificates (PPC's). However, there are certain treatments that are to be provided free-of-charge to all individuals including to those who normally pay for their prescriptions.

In England, the following items should be provided free-of-charge to patients:

- Prescribed contraceptives.
- 'FS' endorsed item(s) to treat a sexually transmitted infection (STI).
- 'FS' endorsed items(s) prescribed for the management of tuberculosis (TB) and latent TB infections, including the effects of TB and the adverse effects from TB treat.
- Items prescribed to recently released prisoners, [where the prescription has been issued by the prison doctor](#).
- Items administered personally by a GP.
- Items supplied to patients at a NHS hospital or walk-in centre.

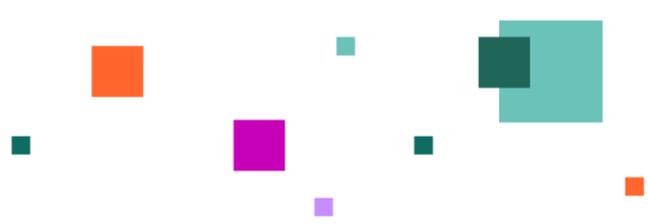
Free-of-charge contraceptives

Contraceptives listed in Part XVI and Part IXA of the Drug Tariff

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 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 contraceptive items (listed in Part XVI and Part IXA) do not need to be endorsed or annotated for contraceptive use by the prescriber and prescription charges should not be levied for these products.

Contraceptives not listed in Part XVI of the Drug Tariff

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 these items. On electronic prescriptions (EPS), prescribers must use the available 'CC' functionality on their IT prescribing systems to apply the '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



endorsement is absent or has not been correctly applied to a prescription item not listed 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](#).

‘FS’ endorsement for ‘Free supply for specified use’

The ‘FS’ endorsement is used by prescribers to indicate to dispensers that the endorsed item(s) are to be provided FOC to the patient on an NHS prescription. **Currently, the prescriber ‘FS’ endorsement should only be used to enable free supply of:**

- **item(s) prescribed for the treatment of a sexually transmitted infection (STI); or**
- **Items(s) prescribed in the management of tuberculosis (TB) and latent TB infections, including the effects of TB and the adverse effects from TB treat**

Pharmacy teams should ensure that no prescription charge is levied for any items correctly endorsed ‘FS’ by the prescriber. There is no specific list of drugs to which the ‘FS’ prescriber endorsement can be applied. Detailed guidance on the use of ‘FS’ endorsement for TB items can be found on the [NHSBSA website](#).

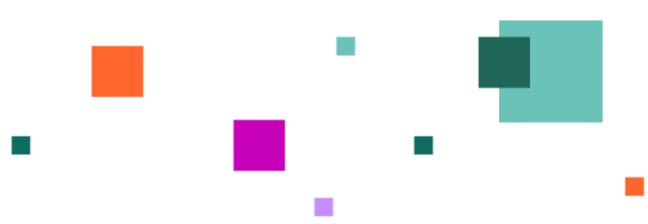
Dispensing ‘FS’ endorsed electronic (EPS) prescriptions

When prescribing STI/TB items, prescribers must use the available ‘FS’ functionality on prescribing IT systems to apply the ‘FS’ endorsement correctly to applicable EPS items. A single ‘FS’ endorsement does not automatically apply to all items ordered on the form – ‘FS’ endorsement needs to be applied individually to each STI/TB item ordered on a NHS prescription form. Prescribers must not free-text the ‘FS’ endorsement and add any supplementary product information into the dosage area or additional instructions field as this information is not captured by 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 cpe.org.uk/dosearea.

Dispensing ‘FS’ endorsed FP10 paper prescriptions

On FP10 paper prescriptions (printed or handwritten), the initials ‘FS’ and the prescriber’s signature (or initials) should be annotated alongside each item being prescribed for the treatment of STIs and/or TB. If there are multiple items prescribed for the treatment of STIs and/or TB, each STI/TB item must be annotated individually with the ‘FS’ endorsement and the prescriber’s initials or signature. There is no patient tick box for FOC sexual health treatments or for treatment of TB 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.

For more information on correct processing of prescriptions with ‘FS’ endorsed items see our [factsheet](#).



Recently released prisoners

People living in England, who have just been released from prison or other secure accommodation (secure training centre or secure children's home), do not have to pay prescription charges. This only applies to HM-issued NHS FP10 or FP10MDA prescriptions issued by the prison doctor, until the person can arrange to see their GP or register with a new GP.

To be exempt, the patient's form must have the initials 'HMP' printed in the prescriber address area on the front of the prescription form. In this instance a signature is not required on the reverse of the prescription form or EPS token.

Note: In September 2025, NHS England [announced](#) that the EPS has been fully extended to Detained Estate healthcare services in England. On electronic prescriptions that bear the 'HMP' initials in the practice address section, pharmacies should select the 0015 HMP exemption category displayed on IT systems before submitting the EPS claim for payment.

Useful links

- For more information on prescription exemptions, please see our [Exemptions from the prescription charge - Community Pharmacy England](#)
- For more FAQs related to free-of-charge contraceptives and 'FS' endorsement please see our page [What does the patient pay?](#)



Appendix 1: List of contraceptive drugs to be dispensed free-of-charge:

Oral preparations	
Generic	Brand
Desogestrel 75microgram tablets	Cerazette 75microgram tablets
	Cerelle 75microgram tablets
	Desogestrel 75microgram tablets
	Desomono 75microgram tablets
	Desorex 75microgram tablets
	Lovima 75microgram tablets
	Zelleta 75microgram tablets
Drospirenone 3mg / Estetrol 14.2mg tablets	Drovelis 3mg/14.2mg tablets
Drospirenone 4mg tablets	Slynd 4mg tablets
Estradiol 1.5mg / Nomegestrol 2.5mg tablets	Zoely 2.5mg/1.5mg tablets
Ethinylestradiol 20microgram / Desogestrel 150microgram tablets	Bimizza 150microgram/20microgram tablets
	Gedarel 20microgram/150microgram tablets
	Mercilon 150microgram/20microgram tablets
Ethinylestradiol 20microgram / Drospirenone 3mg tablets	Eloine 0.02mg/3mg tablets
Ethinylestradiol 20microgram / Gestodene 75microgram tablets	Akizza 75microgram/20microgram tablets
	Femodette tablets
	Millinette 20microgram/75microgram tablets
Ethinylestradiol 30microgram / Desogestrel 150microgram tablets	Cimizt 30microgram/150microgram tablets
	Gedarel 30microgram/150microgram tablets
	Marvelon tablets
Ethinylestradiol 30microgram / Drospirenone 3mg tablets	Dretine 0.03mg/3mg tablets
	Lucette 0.03mg/3mg tablets
	Yacella 0.03mg/3mg tablets
	Yasmin tablets
Ethinylestradiol 30microgram / Gestodene 75microgram tablets	Akizza 75microgram/30microgram tablets
	Femodene tablets
	Millinette 30microgram/75microgram tablets
Ethinylestradiol 30microgram / Levonorgestrel 150microgram tablets	Ambelina 150microgram/30microgram tablets
	Elevin 150microgram/30microgram tablets
	Levest 150/30 tablets
	Maexeni 150microgram/30microgram tablets
	Microgynon 30 tablets
	Ovranette 150microgram/30microgram tablets
	Rigevidon tablets
Ethinylestradiol 35microgram / Norethisterone 1mg tablets	Norimin 1mg/35microgram tablets
Ethinylestradiol 35microgram / Norethisterone 500microgram tablets	Brevinor 500microgram/35microgram tablets
Ethinylestradiol 35microgram / Norgestimate 250microgram tablets	Cilique 250microgram/35microgram tablets
	Lizinna 250microgram/35microgram tablets
Generic Logynon ED tablets	Logynon ED tablets
Generic Logynon tablets	Logynon tablets
	TriRegol tablets

Generic Microgynon 30 ED tablets	Microgynon 30 ED tablets
Generic Qlaira tablets	Qlaira tablets
Generic Synphase tablets	Synphase tablets
Levonorgestrel 1.5mg tablets	Emerres 1.5mg tablets
	Emerres Una 1.5mg tablets
	Levonelle 1500microgram tablets
	Levonelle One Step 1.5mg tablets
	Levonorgestrel 1.5mg tablets
	LoviOne 1.5mg tablets
	Postinor 1500microgram tablets
	Upostelle 1500microgram tablets
Levonorgestrel 30microgram tablets	Norgeston 30microgram tablets
Norethisterone 350microgram tablets	Noriday 350microgram tablets
Ulipristal 30mg tablets	EllaOne 30mg tablets
	Ulipristal 30mg tablets
Injectable preparations	
Generic	Brand
Medroxyprogesterone 104mg/0.65ml suspension for injection pre-filled disposable devices	Sayana Press 104mg/0.65 ml suspension for injection pre-filled disposable devices
Medroxyprogesterone 150mg/1ml suspension for injection pre-filled syringes	Depo-Provera 150mg/1ml suspension for injection pre-filled syringes
Norethisterone 200mg/1ml solution for injection ampoules	Noristerat 200mg/1ml solution for injection ampoules
Intrauterine systems	
Generic	Brand
Levonorgestrel 13.5mg intrauterine device	Jaydess 13.5mg intrauterine device
Levonorgestrel 19.5mg intrauterine device	Kyleena 19.5mg intrauterine device
Levonorgestrel 20micrograms/24hours intrauterine device	Benilexa One Handed 20micrograms/24hours intrauterine delivery system
	Levosert 20micrograms/24hours intrauterine device
	Mirena 20micrograms/24hours intrauterine device
Subdermal implants	
Generic	Brand
Etonogestrel 68mg implant	Nexplanon 68mg implant
Transdermal patches	
Generic	Brand
Ethinylestradiol 33.9micrograms/24hours / Norelgestromin 203micrograms/24hours transdermal patches	Evra transdermal patches
Vaginal pessary / ring / tablets	
Generic	Brand
Ethinylestradiol 2.7mg / Etonogestrel 11.7mg vaginal delivery system	NuvaRing 0.12mg/0.015mg per day vaginal delivery system



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

Intrauterine Contraceptive Devices	
Generic	Brand
Intrauterine contraceptive device	Copper T380 A intrauterine contraceptive device
	Eurogine T 380 Ag intrauterine contraceptive device mini
	Eurogine T 380 Ag intrauterine contraceptive device normal
	Eurogine T 380 Cu intrauterine contraceptive device mini
	Eurogine T 380 Cu intrauterine contraceptive device normal
	Flexi-T 300 intrauterine contraceptive device
	Flexi-T+ 380 intrauterine contraceptive device
	GyneFix intrauterine contraceptive device
	Load 375 intrauterine contraceptive device
	Mini TT380 Slimline intrauterine contraceptive device
	Multi-Safe 375 intrauterine contraceptive device
	Neo-Safe T380 intrauterine contraceptive device
	Nova-T 380 intrauterine contraceptive device
	Optima TCu 380A intrauterine contraceptive device
	Steriload intrauterine contraceptive device
	T-Safe 380A QL intrauterine contraceptive device
	TT380 Slimline intrauterine contraceptive device
UT380 Short intrauterine contraceptive device	
UT380 Standard intrauterine contraceptive device	
Vaginal Applicators	
Generic	Brand
Vaginal applicator type 1	Estriol vaginal applicator type 1
Vaginal Contraceptive Caps (Pessaries)	
Generic	Brand
Vaginal contraceptive cap silicone 22mm	FemCap 22mm
Vaginal contraceptive cap silicone 26mm	FemCap 26mm
Vaginal contraceptive cap silicone 30mm	FemCap 30mm