

# Check before you tick

## Quick reference guide for advisors

This sheet is designed to help support advisors in their conversations around prescription eligibility.

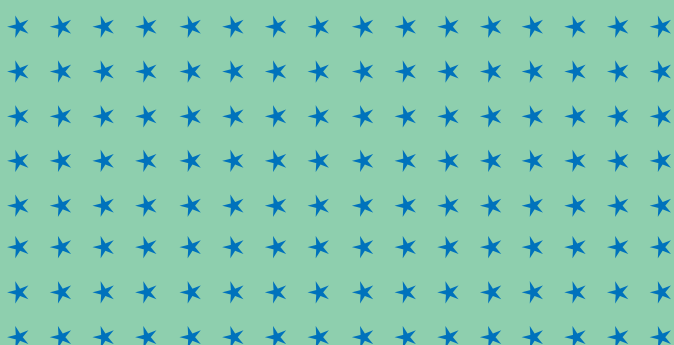
### 1. Understanding prescription eligibility

You can find a detailed overview of prescription eligibility in the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) leaflet "Are you claiming free prescriptions?". This can be used as a reference by you and your colleagues, as well as being given to your customers, clients, or residents to take-away.

The leaflet is available to download at the [Campaign Resource Centre](#). This includes an easy-read version.

Hard copies are also available, and while stocks last, you can order a supply of 50 leaflets by emailing [nhsbsa.b2b@nhs.net](mailto:nhsbsa.b2b@nhs.net). If you would like more than 50 leaflets, please email us at the same address and explain why. If stock is available we will try and accommodate your request (for example, if you would like to mail copies to members or residents).

NHS organisations can order a supply of leaflets directly by contacting [pcse.enquiries@nhs.net](mailto:pcse.enquiries@nhs.net) or calling **0333 014 2884** and asking for PECS leaflets.



## 2. FAQs

Beyond the information in the leaflet, there are some key FAQs below which may be useful to support your conversations.

### **? Who is responsible for making sure the back of the prescription is completed correctly?**

The person to whom the prescription is made out (the patient) is responsible for correctly completing the back of the form. If they are not sure if they should be paying for their prescriptions, then they should check before they tick.

They can do this by using the online eligibility checker:

[www.nhs.uk/checkbeforeyoutick](http://www.nhs.uk/checkbeforeyoutick)

They can also read the "Are you claiming free prescriptions?" leaflet, which is available in pharmacies (so that can refer to it when they are collecting their prescription) or online at [bit.ly/2Qk6TeV](http://bit.ly/2Qk6TeV). An easy-read version is available here: [bit.ly/2Pm1AdE](http://bit.ly/2Pm1AdE)

If you have ordered hard copies of the leaflet (see above) then you can give one to your customers, clients, or residents.

### **? What if someone else claims my prescription for me?**

It is the person to whom the prescription is made out who is responsible (i.e. the patient). If someone is collecting a prescription on the patient's behalf, then they should check the eligibility with the patient before making the claim. They can do this with the patient following the steps above.

### **? Do all benefits entitle you to prescriptions?**

No. The only benefits that automatically entitle you to claim free NHS prescriptions are:

- ✓ Income Support
- ✓ Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- ✓ Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- ✓ Pension Credit (Guarantee Credit)

You are not automatically entitled through:

- ✗ Contribution-based ESA
- ✗ Contribution-related JSA
- ✗ Pension Credit (Savings Credit)
- ✗ Universal Credit\*
- ✗ Tax credits\*\*
- ✗ Incapacity Benefit
- ✗ Disability Living Allowance
- ✗ Personal Independence Payments
- ✗ Any other benefits

You may be entitled to free prescriptions through an alternative claim. For instance, if you have a qualifying medical condition you can apply for a medical exemption certificate, or if you are pregnant you can apply for a maternity exemption certificate.

A range of exemptions and support for people who are on a low income are also in place. Further information can be found at [www.nhs.uk/healthcosts](http://www.nhs.uk/healthcosts)

**? I didn't realise there were two types of ESA/JSA/Pension Credit. It was an honest mistake. Do I have to pay?**

If a patient can show that they did not act wrongfully or with lack of care, or if there is an exceptional reason why they should not pay the penalty charge, in some circumstances we can waive the penalty. However, lack of knowledge or awareness usually will not be deemed as an exceptional reason.

**? I am on Universal Credit, which box do I check?**

Not everyone on Universal Credit is entitled to free prescriptions. If a Universal Credit claimant's earnings are below the prescribed earnings thresholds (see below) the claimant should tick the box on the back of the prescription form stating that they are on income-based Jobseeker's Allowance instead.

The prescription form is being updated to include a box for Universal Credit, and this will be available in 2019.

**? I am on Universal Credit. Do I automatically get free prescriptions?**

No. People entitled to Universal Credit can receive help with their NHS prescription where they have:

- Net earnings of £435 or less during their most recent assessment period; or
- Net earnings of £935 or less during their most recent assessment period if claimant or partner is responsible for a child or has limited capability for work.

People not entitled to help due to their Universal Credit status may qualify for help under the NHS low income scheme. Additionally they may qualify for another exemption from prescription charges e.g. medical or maternity exemption.

Further details can be found on the [nhs.uk](http://nhs.uk) website using the search term "health costs" or going to [www.nhs.uk/healthcosts](http://www.nhs.uk/healthcosts)

**? I didn't realise that I had to have a maternity exemption certificate, I thought my bump/baby was proof enough. It was an honest mistake; do I have to pay?**

If a patient can show that they did not act wrongfully or with lack of care, or if there is an exceptional reason why they should not pay the penalty charge, in some circumstances, we can waive the penalty. However, lack of knowledge or awareness usually will not be deemed as an exceptional reason. That's why it's so important that pregnant women and new mums speak to their GP or Midwife about getting a Maternity Exemption Certificate, and update it if there needs to be an extension (if your pregnancy lasts longer than expected)

## **? My tax credits certificate is out of date, why I haven't received a new one?**

You are entitled to free prescriptions if your annual family income used to calculate their tax credits is £15,276 or less and you receive either:

- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit paid together
- Working Tax Credit including a disability or severe disability element

HM Revenue and Customs send NHS Business Services Authority the details of patients who meet these conditions, so we can send them an NHS tax credit exemption certificate.

Certificates are valid for up to seven months. If you're still entitled, you will be sent a new certificate before your current one expires.

If your certificate has expired and you haven't received a new one, this is normally because your circumstances have changed and you no longer meet the qualifying conditions. However, sometimes patients who still meet the conditions aren't sent a certificate because they have started to receive a benefit that automatically entitles them to free prescriptions.

It's your responsibility to check the expiry date. Not realising that your certificate has expired usually will not be accepted as a reason to waive the penalty charge.

## **? I had a valid exemption certificate at the time of my prescription. Why have I received a Penalty Charge Notice?**

Penalty Charge Notices are sometimes issued to patients who were entitled to claim free prescriptions because of data mismatches. This may be, for example, because the patient has moved but not updated their address with their GP or changed their name and not updated their exemption certificate. In situations like these, if the patient contacts NHSBSA, we can cancel the charges.

## **? I had a certificate, but it expired before I collected my prescription. Can the charges be waived?**

All exemption certificates have 'valid from' and 'valid to' dates. It's your responsibility to check these dates and not realising that their certificate had expired will not usually be accepted as a reason to waive the penalty charge.

New certificates can't be backdated to cover retrospective claims for free prescriptions.

## **? I don't qualify for free prescriptions, but I am worried that I can't afford my medication. What can I do?**

You may be eligible for help from the NHS Low Income Scheme. Otherwise Prepayment Prescriptions Certificate can lower the cost of prescriptions, particularly if you need more than one item a month.

You can find information on both of these at: [www.nhs.uk/healthcosts](http://www.nhs.uk/healthcosts)