

## Free or Low Cost Prescriptions

Prescriptions are free to all in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales but not in England. However, there are certain people in England who can access free NHS prescriptions for medication if they fit certain criteria such as:

- you are aged 60 or over
- you are under 16
- you are aged 16, 17 or 18 in full-time education
- you are pregnant, or have had a baby in the previous 12 months and have a valid exemption certificate
- you have a listed medical condition and have a valid exemption certificate (see below)
- you are an NHS in-patient
- you get or are included in an award of someone getting:
  - Income Support (IS)
  - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA-IB) paid on its own or with contribution-based JSA
  - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA-IR) paid on its own or with contribution-based ESA
  - Universal Credit
- are included in an award of Pension Credit (Guarantee Credit) paid on its own or with Pension Credit (Savings Credit)
- you are entitled to, or named on, a valid NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate (this includes any young people included in your award)
- you are named on a valid HC2 certificate (an NHS Low Income Scheme Certificate for full help or
- have a valid war pension exemption certificate and the prescription is for your accepted disability

If you have any queries about *medical exemption* you can phone the helpline on 0845 601 8076 or 0300 330 1341

## Maternity Exemption Certificate

If you are pregnant or have had a child in the past year, you can apply for a Maternity Exemption Certificate, using form FW8 which can be obtained from your doctor, nurse, midwife or health visitor. If you have a Maternity Exemption Certificate all your prescriptions are free, whatever the medication is for.

After you complete the form, your doctor, nurse, midwife or health visitor will sign the form to confirm the information given by you is correct and send it off for you.

Your exemption certificate will last until 12 months after the expected date of the birth. If your baby is born early, you can continue to use your exemption certificate until it runs out. You can apply for an extension if your baby is born late. If you apply after your baby is born, your exemption certificate will run for 12 months from the birth of your baby.

If you have any queries about *maternity exemption*, you can phone the helpline on 0300 330 1341

### Listed Medical Conditions

If you have one of the conditions listed below you can apply for an exemption certificate so that you don't have to pay for your prescriptions. This will include any prescriptions for other medical conditions you may have:

- A permanent fistula which needs continuous surgical dressing or an appliance (i.e. caecostomy, colostomy, larynges-tomy or ileostomy)
- Treatment for cancer; note this includes treatment for the effects of cancer, or treatment for the effects of a current or previous cancer treatment
- A form of hypoadrenalism such as Addison's disease for which specific substitution therapy is essential
- Diabetes insipidus and other forms of hypopituitarism
- Diabetes mellitus except where treatment is by diet alone
- Hypoparathyroidism
- Myxoedema (hypothyroidism which needs thyroid hormone replacement)
- Myasthenia gravis
- Epilepsy requiring continuous anticonvulsive therapy
- A continuing physical disability which means you cannot go out without help from another person

If you are not sure about the name of your condition, ask your doctor. He can advise you about free prescriptions but you need to find out yourself if you are entitled to an exemption certificate.

### Applying for Exemption Certificate

To apply for an exemption certificate (Medex), you need to ask your doctor's surgery for an application form FP92A. After you have completed it your doctor (or one of his colleagues who can access your medication records), or the doctor at the hospital that is treating you will sign to confirm the information you've given is correct

and then post the application form for you. You will then be sent a Medical Exemption Certificate in the post.

The Medical Exemption Certificate is normally valid for 5 years, starting one month before the date on which the application is received. You may not receive a reminder so it's your responsibility to make sure that you get it renewed.

### **Claiming your Free Prescriptions**

If you are entitled to free prescriptions, you need to put a cross in the first box in part 1 that applies to you (mark one box only) and fill in and sign the Declaration in part 3. If someone else (your representative) goes to get your medication, the Declaration can be signed either by them or you can sign it before you give it to them.

You may be asked for proof that you are exempt so it's always a good idea to carry your Medical Exemption Certificate with you at all times. Make sure you give it to your representative if they collect your prescriptions for you.

You are responsible for the accuracy of the declaration even if your representative collects the prescription for you so make sure you know whether or not you are still entitled to free prescriptions.

### **NHS Low Income Scheme**

Some people on a low income who are not receiving any of the qualifying benefits above, may qualify for help with prescription charges via the NHS Low Income Scheme. Entitlement is based on your circumstances, such as your level of income, savings, etc.

You need to fill in an HC1(SC) form 'Claim for Help with Health Costs' giving various details of your circumstances and then send it off in the prepaid envelope provided.

You can obtain an HC1 claim form from:

- your JobCentre Plus office
- an NHS hospital,
- by phoning the NHS Formsline on 0845 610 1112
- by sending an email to [nhsforms@spsl.uk.com](mailto:nhsforms@spsl.uk.com)
- your GP, dentist or optician may stock them

If you qualify for help, you will be sent an HC2 Certificate for full help, or an HC3 Certificate for partial help, which you will need to produce when paying for your prescription. The certificate will tell you who it covers, what help it provides and how long it lasts. If your circumstances change for the better, you can continue using the certificate until it expires. If your circumstances change for the worse during the period of the certificate, you should make another claim.

Don't forget that you will need to make a new claim before your current certificate expires.

## Claiming Refunds

If you are on a low income, but have not yet got your exemption certificate, you can get a refund by sending in a receipt for your prescriptions. **Make sure you get an official NHS receipt form (FP57) from the pharmacist at the time because you cannot get one later on.** You need to complete the form and send it off. A refund will then be sent to you. **You have to apply for a refund within three months of paying the prescription charge.**

## Prescription Prepayment Certificates (PPC)

If you do not qualify for exemption you may be able to reduce the cost of your prescriptions by buying a Prescription Prepayment Certificate (PPC) which will cover the cost of all your prescriptions during a particular period. It may be worth doing this if you pay for more than 3 prescriptions in three months or more than thirteen in a year.

A PPC costs £29.10 for 3 months and £104.00 for 12 months.

You can apply for a PPC by:

- going to [www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/ppc](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/ppc) (pay by debit card or credit card)
- phoning 0300 330 1341 (pay by debit card or credit card)
- filling in form FP95 available from your pharmacy (pay by cheque or postal order)

If you pay a prescription charge whilst waiting for a Prescription Prepayment Certificate to be issued, you can get a refund but this depends on the length of the PPC and when and how circumstances change.

For more information on this go to page 25 of Form HC11 or, if you have any queries about Prescription Prepayment Certificates you can phone the helpline on 0300 330 1341.

For more information go to: <http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/HelpWithHealthCosts.aspx>

To read Help with Health Costs leaflet (HC11) go to:

[http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/HealthCosts/Documents/HealthCosts/HC11\\_April\\_2013.pdf](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/HealthCosts/Documents/HealthCosts/HC11_April_2013.pdf)

To read Claim for Health Costs leaflet (HC1) go to:

<http://portal.leeds-art.ac.uk/sites/default/files/content-images/51/HC1%20Front%20Page.pdf>

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