

Claiming free prescriptions?



If you claim free NHS prescriptions that you're not entitled to, you could be facing a **penalty charge of up to £100** – as well as the original prescription charge(s). An additional charge of up to £50 may apply if you do not pay within the required timescale.



If you're not sure whether you qualify, please pay for your prescriptions and ask for an NHS receipt – you may be able to claim a refund later. Even if you don't currently qualify, this guide tells you what help could be available.



If you're sure that the NHS covers the cost of your prescriptions, please **show proof of your entitlement** to the pharmacy or practice staff before signing the patient declaration.

The NHS covers the cost of prescriptions for patients who meet certain criteria. Before you declare that you don't have to pay, please use this guide to check that you qualify.

What entitles you to free prescriptions?



Age



Benefits



Certificates

It's your responsibility to check whether you're entitled before you declare that you don't have to pay and the staff at your pharmacy or practice should ask to see proof of your exemption. Regular checks are carried out on prescriptions that are not paid for, which means you could be asked to provide proof at a later date.

Age



The NHS will cover the cost of your prescriptions if you are:

- 60 or over
- under 16
- 16, 17 or 18 and in full-time education.

Students aged 19 and over are not automatically entitled to free prescriptions. However, many do qualify through the NHS Low Income Scheme. Please see page 6 for more details.

Proving your entitlement

You don't need to prove your age if your date of birth is printed on your prescription. If it isn't, you can use any official document that shows your date of birth as proof, such as your birth certificate or passport. A letter from your school or college proves you are in full-time education.

Benefits



Not all benefits entitle you to free prescriptions.

You will have to pay for your prescription even if you are included in an award of:

- contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance paid on its own
- contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance paid on its own
- Pension Credit (Savings Credit) paid on its own
- any other benefit paid on its own and not listed in the green box below (such as Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment, Incapacity Benefit etc.).



The NHS will cover the cost of your prescriptions if, at the time the prescription is dispensed, you are included in an award of:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance paid on its own or with contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance paid on its own or with contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance
- Pension Credit (Guarantee Credit) paid on its own or with Pension Credit (Savings Credit)
- Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit including a disability element or Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit paid together. Your family income must also be £15,276 or less. You will normally be sent an NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate – please see page 4.

The NHS will also cover the cost of your prescriptions if you are, or have been, included in an award of Universal Credit. This is a temporary arrangement until 31 October 2014. After this date, please check the NHS Choices website or call 0300 330 1343 for more information.

Proving your entitlement

You can use an entitlement letter or award notice from either the Department of Work and Pensions, HM Revenue and Customs, Jobcentre Plus or Pension Service as proof.

Certificates



The NHS will cover the cost of your prescriptions if you have a valid exemption certificate.

Maternity exemption certificate

If you are pregnant or have had a baby within the last 12 months, the NHS will only cover the cost of your prescriptions if you have a maternity exemption certificate. You can apply for a certificate by asking your doctor, midwife or health visitor for an FW8 application form. The form tells you what to do.

Your certificate will be valid from one month before the date that we receive your application. It will expire the day before your baby's first birthday.

Medical exemption certificate

The NHS will only cover the cost of your prescriptions on medical grounds if you have a medical exemption certificate. To find out if you're eligible, speak to your doctor. If yours is one of the medical conditions that entitles you to a certificate, your doctor will give you an FP92A application form. The form tells you what to do.

Your certificate will be valid for five years, starting from one month before the date that we receive your application.

NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate

If your family income is £15,276 or less and you receive Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit including a disability element or Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit paid together, you will automatically be sent an NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate. It will be valid for up to seven months. However, your Tax Credit award notice also shows that you meet the qualifying conditions and can be used instead of a certificate. Your partner and any young person included in the award will be covered too.



HC2 certificate (NHS Low Income Scheme certificate for full help with health costs)

If you are on a low income, the NHS will cover the cost of your prescriptions if you have applied to the NHS Low Income Scheme and been issued with an HC2 certificate. Your partner and any young person included in the award will be covered too. You will need to reapply when your certificate reaches its expiry date.

Please note that the cost of your prescriptions are not covered by the NHS if you have an HC3 certificate for partial help with health costs.

For more information on the NHS Low Income Scheme, see page 6.

War pension exemption certificate

If you have a war pension exemption certificate, the NHS will only cover the cost of prescriptions relating to your accepted disability. You will need to pay for any other prescriptions you may need, unless you are exempt on other grounds.

Proving your entitlement

Your certificate is your proof. It must be in date when your prescription is dispensed and you should always show your certificate to the practice or pharmacy staff when you collect your prescriptions.

Free of charge contraceptives

The NHS covers the cost of items prescribed for contraceptive purposes. However, you will have to pay for other items on the same prescription unless you are exempt because of your age, benefits or certificate.

If you're still unsure

If you're not sure that you qualify for the NHS to cover the cost of your prescriptions or you're waiting to find out, you should complete and sign the prescription form as a paying patient, pay for your prescription and ask for an NHS receipt (form FP57). If you then find that you do qualify and can prove it, you can claim a refund. The receipt tells you what to do.



Don't run the risk

You are responsible for your claim, even if someone else collects the prescription for you. If you claim free prescriptions that you don't qualify for, you could be facing a penalty charge of up to £100 as well as the prescription charge(s). Under the National Health Service (Penalty Charge) Regulations 1999, if you don't pay within the required timescale, an additional charge of up to £50 may apply.

How to get help with prescription costs

NHS Low Income Scheme

If you have a low income, you may be entitled to help with the cost of prescriptions and other NHS charges through the NHS Low Income Scheme. You can apply for the scheme as long as your savings, investments or property (not including the place where you live) don't exceed £16,000, or £23,250 if you permanently live in a care home. Any help you're entitled to is also available to your partner and any dependent young people.

You'll need to complete an HC1 application form, providing details of your current financial position. You can order a form online at www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/HealthCosts/1128.aspx or pick one up at your local Jobcentre Plus office. Your doctor, dentist, pharmacist or optician may also be able to give you one.

If you need help making your claim or have questions about the NHS Low Income Scheme, call 0300 330 1343 to speak to an adviser.

Prescription prepayment certificates (PPCs)

If you need to pay for your prescriptions, you could save money by buying a PPC for either three months or 12 months. If you choose the 12 month option, you can spread the cost by paying in 10 monthly direct debit instalments. Ask your pharmacist or doctor for current prices.

PPCs cover all NHS prescriptions dispensed while the certificate is valid. You can choose your PPC's start date, as long as the date you choose is no more than a month before or after the date that you apply.

To buy a PPC:

- visit www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/ppc
- call 0300 330 1341
- ask your doctor or pharmacy for an FP95 application form.

You can also buy PPCs over the counter at some pharmacies, although you won't be able to pay by direct debit. Ask your pharmacist for more information.

You'll need to show your PPC when collecting your prescriptions. If you buy a PPC and then become entitled to free prescriptions, you may be eligible for a full or partial refund. For more information, visit

www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/HealthCosts/2132.aspx or call 0300 330 1341.

How to find out more

Useful websites

- For information on benefit and pension entitlement, visit the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions
- For more information on exemption certificates, the NHS Low Income Scheme and prescription prepayment certificates, visit the NHS Help with Health Costs website: www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/healthcosts
- For more information on help with prescription charges, dental charges, eyecare costs, healthcare travel costs, and wigs and fabric support costs, visit the NHS Choices website: www.nhs.uk/healthcosts

Important phone numbers

NHS Help with Health Costs:

- [Medical and maternity exemption certificate helpline](#): 0300 330 1341
- [NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate helpline](#): 0300 330 1347
- [NHS Low Income Scheme helpline](#): 0300 330 1343
- [Prescription prepayment certificate \(PPC\) order line and helpline](#):
0300 330 1341

Opening hours: 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 3pm on Saturday.

Other organisations:

- [Pension Service helpline](#): 0345 606 0265
Opening hours: 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday
- [Jobcentre Plus \(for enquiries about Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support or Employment and Support Allowance\)](#): 0345 608 8545
Opening hours: 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday
- [Jobcentre Plus \(for enquiries about Universal Credit\)](#): 0345 600 0723
Opening hours: 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday
- [Tax Credits helpline](#): 0345 300 3900
Opening hours: 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 4pm on Saturday

Calls to any of the numbers listed here cost up to 9p per minute if calling from a landline and up to 40p per minute if calling from a mobile. You may get free calls to some numbers as part of your call package – check with your provider.

To request this information in an alternative format, such as large print or braille, please call **0300 330 9291**.