

Help your patients avoid penalty charges

If your patients claim free NHS prescriptions that they're not entitled to, they could be facing a penalty charge of up to £100 – as well as the original prescription charges. This guide will help you to protect both your patients and NHS funds.

Do:

- ✓ encourage your patients to check that they're entitled before claiming free prescriptions. A patient booklet and other resources are available at: www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/freeprescriptions
- ✓ make sure patients are certain that they're entitled before they complete the declaration on the prescription form. If they're not sure, ask them to pay, issue an FP57 receipt and explain that if they can later confirm that they're entitled, they can claim a refund within three months.
- ✓ ask to see evidence of patients' entitlement and check the expiry date on any certificates you're shown. If a patient can't provide proof, mark the 'Evidence not seen' box on the prescription and remind them that their entitlement could be checked at a later date.
- ✓ explain to patients with qualifying long term medical conditions, pregnant women and those who have had babies in the last 12 months that they must have a valid medical or maternity exemption certificate to be entitled to free prescriptions. To apply for a certificate, they'll need to contact their GP, midwife or health visitor.
- ✓ remember that patients who currently pay for their prescriptions may benefit from buying a prescription prepayment certificate or applying for the NHS Low Income Scheme. Visit www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/healthcosts for more information.



Don't:

- ✗ make assumptions. Remember that not all benefits entitle patients to free prescriptions and patients with long term medical conditions like diabetes or epilepsy may not have medical exemption certificates. Even if you've seen a patient's exemption certificate before, it may have expired since then.
- ✗ hurry the patient (or their representative). Give them time to read the declaration on the prescription form and information materials.
- ✗ forget that if a patient makes an incorrect claim, intentionally or otherwise, they could have to pay 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 they don't pay on time.
- ✗ turn a blind eye. If you suspect that a patient is fraudulently claiming free NHS prescriptions, visit www.reportnhsfraud.nhs.uk or call the NHS Fraud and Corruption Reporting Line on 0800 028 4060.

Your role is crucial in making sure patients can access the treatment they need and that taxpayers' money is spent appropriately, so please keep this guide and the 'Are you claiming free prescriptions?' booklet* handy to help you. More information and resources are available at:

www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/freeprescriptions

* If you don't have any copies of the booklet left, it's available online at: www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/freeprescriptions.

