

Serious Shortage Protocol (SSP) for levothyroxine 12.5mcg tablets – corresponding guidance on endorsement, prescription charges, remuneration and reimbursement plus Q&A.

SSP for levothyroxine 12.5microgram (mcg) tablets

1) Endorsement

The contractor must endorse the prescription form, EPS token or Electronic Reimbursement Endorsement Message (EREM) as per Clause 9, Part II of the Drug Tariff and are advised to endorse the product name and the quantity which was supplied. If the contractor will choose to endorse the EPS token instead of the EREM, then they will need to indicate on the EREM either “ND” or “Not dispensed” and then proceed with the endorsement on the EPS token.

For the product name the following options will be accepted on the endorsement:

- a) Name of the product written in full – levothyroxine 12.5mcg tablets
- b) Abbreviation of the name – tabs (tablets)

Contractors should note that abbreviations for these endorsements are allowed due to a limited number of characters in the endorsement field provided by some system suppliers. Contractors should also note that there should be no spaces in between the wording for the endorsement options as outlined in the table below.

Example no.	<i>Endorsement options</i>	
	Option 1	Option 2
<p>Example 1: Prescription for levothyroxine 12.5mcg tablets x 56</p> <p>Pharmacy contractor supplied levothyroxine 25mcg tablets x 28</p>	NCSO,tabs x 28	NCSO,levothyroxine 25mcg tablets x 28

2) Prescription charges

Pharmacy contractors must take one prescription levy for this SSP from patients who are not exempt from prescription charges.

3) Remuneration

Supply in accordance with this SSP will result in the following fees being paid to the contractor:

- One Single Activity Fee (£1.27)
- One SSP fee (£5.35)

4) Reimbursement

The supplied product in accordance with this SSP will be reimbursed as if it was dispensed against a prescription, i.e. in this instance contractors will be reimbursed the Part VIII A reimbursement price for the levothyroxine 25mcg tablets. The reimbursement price will account for VAT payment.

Q&A

Will the SSPs apply to cross-border prescriptions?

Yes. Patients from Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland who present their prescriptions for levothyroxine 12.5 microgram (mcg) tablets in England are eligible to receive an alternative supply under the terms of the SSP (only where pharmacists consider it appropriate to do so using their professional judgement).

Does the SSPs apply to private prescriptions?

Yes. The scope of an SSP applies to valid prescriptions that meets the requirements of the Human Medicine Regulations (2012), so it would cover both NHS and private prescriptions, unless where it stated otherwise on the SSP itself.

Will prescription charges apply under an SSP?

Yes, patients who are not exempt from prescription charges would continue to pay for this as usual. The only circumstance in which patients would not have to pay for a prescription charge, is where an SSP recommends a lower quantity to be supplied. Please note that the SSP for levothyroxine 12.5 microgram (mcg) tablets does not recommend a lower quantity of medicine to be supplied, so patients will continue to pay prescription charges unless they are already exempt e.g. medical certificate exemption. For more information please see the above guidance.

Can pharmacists use their professional judgement to supply an alternative fluoxetine product to patients that is not listed in the SSP?

Pharmacists are not able to deviate from the recommendations on what to supply to patients as outlined in the SSP for levothyroxine 12.5 microgram (mcg) tablets. However, if pharmacists think that an alternative product not listed in the SSP would be suitable for the patient, they should either contact the prescriber to discuss this (with the patient's consent) or direct the patient back to the prescriber.