

Serious Shortage Protocol (SSP) for paracetamol 120mg and 240mg suppositories – corresponding guidance on endorsement, prescription charges, remuneration and reimbursement plus Q&A.

SSP for paracetamol 120mg and 240mg suppositories

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.

Electronic prescription:

Where SSP endorsement functionality is available on the dispensing system the contractor must select SSP and input the three-digit reference number, leaving a space between SSP and the reference number, as shown below. The contractor must also select in the system the SSP item that has been supplied.

Example	Endorsement
	Option
<p>Prescription for paracetamol 120mg suppositories x 10</p> <p>Pharmacy contractor supplies paracetamol 125mg suppositories x 10</p> <p>Pharmacy contractor selects in system paracetamol 125mg suppositories x 10</p>	<p>SSP 015</p>
<p>Prescription for paracetamol 240mg suppositories x 10</p> <p>Pharmacy contractor supplies paracetamol 250mg suppositories x 10</p> <p>Pharmacy contractor selects in system paracetamol 250mg suppositories x 10</p>	<p>SSP 015</p>

Non-electronic prescription form:

Example	Endorsement
	Option
Prescription for paracetamol 120mg suppositories x 10 Pharmacy contractor supplies paracetamol 125mg suppositories x 10	SSP 015 Paracetamol 125mg suppositories x 10
Prescription for paracetamol 240mg suppositories x 10 Pharmacy contractor supplies paracetamol 250mg suppositories x 10	SSP 015 Paracetamol 250mg suppositories x 10

2) Prescription charges

Pharmacy contractors must take one prescription levy. Only one prescription charge will be applicable for patients who are not exempt from prescription charges.

3) Remuneration

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

- One Single Activity Fee (£1.29)
- 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 VIIIA reimbursement price for the paracetamol 125mg or 250mg suppositories. 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 paracetamol 120mg or 240mg suppositories 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 paracetamol 120mg and 240mg suppositories does not recommend a lower quantity to be supplied, so patients will continue to pay prescription charges (unless they are already exempt). For more information please see the above guidance.

Can pharmacists use their professional judgement to supply an alternative paracetamol product to patients that is not listed in the SSP e.g. dispersible tablets/ unlicensed/ special products?

Pharmacists are not able to deviate from the recommendations on what to supply to patients as outlined in the SSP for paracetamol 120mg and 240mg suppositories. 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.