

New prescription charge freeze to help ease cost of living

- Freeze will help ease the cost of living pressures on households, saving £17 million overall
- Comes alongside record government NHS investment to tackle the Covid backlog and reduce waiting times

NHS prescription charges will be frozen for the first time in 12 years to help with the cost of living.

Charges usually increase in line with average inflation. This year – in a move not seen for over a decade – the cost for prescriptions will remain the same to help ease cost of living pressures and ensure prescription medication remains accessible.

This means people in England who pay prescription charges are saving £17 million overall. Charges for prescriptions will remain at £9.35 for a single charge or £30.25 for a 3-month prescription prepayment certificate (PPCs). 12 month PPCs will remain at £108.10 and can be paid for in instalments, meaning people can get all the medicines they need for just over £2 a week.

In addition to the freeze on charges, the NHS Low Income scheme offers help with prescription payments, with free prescriptions for eligible people within certain groups such as pensioners, students, and those who receive state benefits or live in care homes.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

“The rise in the cost of living has been unavoidable as we face global challenges and the repercussions of Putin’s illegal war in Ukraine. Whilst we can’t completely prevent these rises, where we can help – we absolutely will.

“This is why I am freezing prescription charges to help ease some of these pressures and put money back in people’s pockets.”

The government and NHS is working to tackle the covid backlogs while reforming routine care services, ending long waits and improving patient care. The pandemic has put huge pressure on health and care services and over the next three years, a record £39 billion will be invested through the Health and Care Levy, so the NHS has the funding it needs. The NHS is opening new surgical hubs and 160 community diagnostic centres so patients have easier access to tests closer to home – with 88 already open, delivering over 800,000 scans.

In addition, the Health and Care Bill received Royal Assent last month,

enacting the most significant health legislation in a decade into law. It marks an important step in the government's ambitious health and care agenda, setting up systems and structures to reform how health and adult social care work together, tackle long waiting lists built up during the pandemic, and address some of the long-term challenges faced by the country including a growing and ageing population, chronic conditions and inequalities in health outcomes.

The government is listening to people's concerns and targeting support at the lowest paid in society, with measures worth over £22 billion in 2022-23 to help with the cost of energy bills and to ensure people keep more of their money. This includes raising the threshold at which people start to pay National Insurance to £12,570, providing a £330 a year tax cut to 30 million workers in July. The National Living Wage has risen to £9.50 per hour – an extra £1,000 a year for a full-time worker, and taxes have been cut for the lowest paid workers on Universal Credit – so they can keep more of what they earn.

The prescription freeze will also apply to NHS wigs and fabric supports; these prices will remain at current levels:

- Surgical brassiere £30.70
- Abdominal or spinal support £46.30
- Stock modacrylic wig £75.70
- Partial human hair wig £200.50
- Full bespoke human hair wig £293.20

You are exempt from charges if you:

- are 60 or over
- are under 16
- are 16 to 18 and in full-time education
- are pregnant or have had a baby in the previous 12 months and have a valid maternity exemption certificate (MatEx)
- have a specified medical condition and have a valid medical exemption certificate (MedEx)
- have a continuing physical disability that prevents you going out without help from another person and have a valid medical exemption certificate (MedEx)
- hold a valid war pension exemption certificate and the prescription is for your accepted disability
- are an NHS inpatient.