

## NHS maternity exemption certificate guidance

### Digital maternity exemption service

If you are a healthcare professional, you can complete an online application to issue maternity exemption certificates to your patients at [www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/digitalmatex](https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/digitalmatex)



[Register](#)



[Sign in](#)

### About the NHS maternity exemption certificate

The NHS maternity exemption certificate entitles patients to free NHS prescriptions.

Patients can also use this certificate whilst pregnant to prove entitlement to free NHS dental treatment.

### Who is eligible?

Patients are eligible for a maternity exemption certificate if, at the time of application, they are pregnant or have given birth to a live child or a child registerable as still born in the last 12 months.

### How to apply

Eligible patients need the support of their midwife, health visitor or doctor to apply.

You can help your patients fill in the paper application, form FW8, or you can complete an online application through the digital service.

It's best for your patients if the application is made as soon as possible in their pregnancy, for example at their booking in appointment.

Patients will receive a digital certificate straight away if they have given an email address. Otherwise, they will get a paper certificate in the post within 10 working days.

### When will the certificate start?

The certificate will be backdated to start one month before the date we receive the application.

## When will the certificate expire?

The certificate will last for 12 months from either:

- baby's due date
- the birth of her baby

If baby is born early, your patient can continue to use their certificate. If baby is born later than expected they can contact us to extend their certificate.

## What if my patient has a miscarriage or stillbirth?

Your patient can continue to use her certificate for free NHS prescriptions.

She is still entitled to free NHS dental treatment if this happened after her 24th week of pregnancy.

## Exemption checking

It's important that patients do not claim free NHS prescriptions until they receive their certificate.

If your patient claims free NHS prescriptions or NHS dental treatment that they're not entitled to, or don't hold an exemption certificate for, they could have to pay a penalty charge of up to £100.

## Patient information

Patients can find more information on our website at [www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/matex](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/matex)

Patients can use the online eligibility checker to see if they can get help with other health costs at [www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/check](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/check)

As long as the certificate covers the date they collect their items, your patient can get their NHS prescriptions for free. They should mark box 'D' on the prescription form and sign the declaration. They can show their certificate as evidence that their exemption is valid.

Patients can contact us at [www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/contact-us](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/contact-us) or call 0300 330 1341. We offer a telephone translation service if English is not their first language.

If your patient pays for an NHS prescription charge, they can get a refund if:

- they get an NHS refund form (FP57) when they pay for their NHS prescription, they can't get one later
- their certificate covers the date they paid for their NHS prescription.

The FP57 tells them how to claim. They need to apply for a refund within three months of paying the prescription charge.

If your patient currently holds a valid NHS Prescription Prepayment Certificate, they may be entitled to a refund. More information is available in the HC11 booklet at [www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/ppc](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/ppc)

## Digital maternity exemption service support

If you have any questions about the digital maternity exemption service email [healthcosts@nhsbsa.nhs.uk](mailto:healthcosts@nhsbsa.nhs.uk)



### Check if an application was successful

You can check if your patient has a valid exemption certificate at [www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/exemption](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/exemption)

If no exemption is found, reprocess the online application.

### How to register for the digital service

To register online you need to be:

- registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC); and
- on the NHS Electronic Staff Record (ESR)

You can still register to use this service if you're a GP, midwife, practice nurse or health visitor and have an email address with an organisation that:

- meets the [secure email standard](#)
- uses Office 365 or a Hybrid Exchange email service

You can check if your organisation's email meets these requirements with your IT department.

If it does, email [healthcosts@nhsbsa.nhs.uk](mailto:healthcosts@nhsbsa.nhs.uk) with your:

- name
- GMC/NMC number
- organisational email address

We will use these details to verify your professional identity and process your registration.

## The digital application



If you notice an error in the application, ask your patient to contact us straightaway at [www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/contact-us](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/contact-us) or by calling **0300 330 1341**.