



Are you entitled to help with health costs?

- HS prescriptions
- HS dental treatment
- Sight tests, glasses and contact lenses
- Travel to hospital for HS treatment
- HS wigs and fabric supports

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An Roinn

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agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

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This booklet gives guidance about HS charging arrangements in Northern Ireland.

Most HS treatment is free, although there can be charges for some things. This booklet tells you what you are entitled to. It also tells you about the help you might get with the cost of the following if you are on a low income:

- HS prescriptions;
- HS dental treatment;
- Sight tests;
- Glasses and contact lenses;
- Necessary costs of travel to and from hospital for HS treatment under the care of a hospital consultant;
- HS wigs and fabric support (spinal or abdominal support or surgical brassiere).

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

You can quickly check if you are entitled to free treatment by going to the tables which start on page 6.

For more detailed guidance you need to go to pages 4-5 of this booklet and find the group you most easily fit into, then go to the page number shown (for example, if you are 60 or over, go to page 12).

After reading about the group that most applies to you, check to see if any others also apply (you may fit into more than one group).

For instance, you might be:

- 60 or over and also on a low income; or
- Pregnant and also have a specified medical condition.

If this applies to you, you need to make sure you read about both groups.

When you have found the group or groups you belong to and what help you can get, go on to page 26. This tells you how to get help with HS health costs when you go for treatment.

REFUNDS. You can also get information about refunds in this booklet - read page 30.

PENALTY CHARGES. If you are found to have made a wrongful claim for help with health costs, you will face penalty charges and may be prosecuted under powers introduced by the Health and Personal Social Services (Penalty Charges) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2002.

CURRENT RATES. The current rates of HS charges and optical voucher values are listed in leaflet HC12.

Go to page 48 to find out how to get this leaflet. It is also available on the Internet:

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

THIS LEAFLET GIVES GENERAL GUIDANCE ONLY AND SHOULD NOT BE TREATED AS A COMPLETE AND AUTHORITATIVE STATEMENT OF LAW.

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FREE PRESCRIPTIONS

You can get free HS prescriptions if at the time the prescription is dispensed you:

- Are aged 60 or over;
- Are under 16;
- Are in full-time education and aged 16, 17 or 18;
- Are pregnant or have had a baby in the previous 12 months and have a valid exemption certificate;
- Have a listed medical condition and have a valid exemption certificate;
- Have a continuing physical disability which means you cannot go out without help from another person and have a valid exemption certificate;
- Are an HS in-patient;
- Are getting, or your partner gets: Income Support, or Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, or Pension Credit guarantee credit;
- Are entitled to, or named on, a valid HS tax credit exemption certificate;
- Are named on a valid HC2 certificate;
- Are a war pensioner, the prescription is for your pensionable disablement and you have a valid war pension exemption certificate.

Supplied free:

- Medication administered at a hospital;
- Prescribed contraceptives, medication personally administered by a GP;
- Medication supplied by a hospital for the treatment of a sexually transmissible infection (STI).

FREE HS DENTAL TREATMENT

You can get free HS dental treatment if when the treatment starts you:

- Are aged under 18;
- Are aged 18 and in full time education;
- Are pregnant or have borne a child within the 12 months before treatment starts;
- Are an HS in-patient and the treatment is carried out by the hospital dentist;
- Are an HS Hospital Dental Service out-patient;*
- Are a Community Dental Service patient.*

* There may be a charge for dentures and bridges.

Or, when the treatment starts or when the charge is made:

- You are getting, or your partner gets: Income Support, or Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, or Pension Credit guarantee credit;
- You are entitled to, or named on, a valid HS tax credit exemption certificate;
- You are named on a valid HC2 certificate.

Partial help: if you are named on an HC3 certificate you might get some help towards the cost of your HS dental treatment.

War pensioners – read page 26.

FREE HS SIGHT TESTS

You can get free sights tests if you:

- Are under 16;
- Are in full-time education and aged 16, 17 or 18;
- Are aged 60 or over;
- Are a diagnosed glaucoma patient;
- Are aged 40 or over and are a parent, brother, sister, son or daughter of a diagnosed glaucoma patient, or

- Have been advised by an ophthalmologist that you are at risk of glaucoma;
- Have been diagnosed as diabetic;
- Are registered blind or partially sighted;
- Need complex lenses;
- Are someone whose sight test is carried out through the hospital eye department as part of the management of your eye condition;
- Are getting, or your partner gets:
Income Support, or
Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, or
Pension Credit guarantee credit;
- Are entitled to, or named on, a valid HS tax credit exemption certificate;
- Are named on a valid HC2 certificate.
Partial help: if you are named on a valid HC3 certificate you might get some help towards the cost of a private sight test.

War pensioners – read page 26.

HS VOUCHERS TOWARDS THE COST OF GLASSES OR CONTACT LENSES

You can get vouchers if you:

- Are under 16;
- Are in full-time education and aged 16, 17 or 18;
- Need complex lenses – read page 21;
- Are getting, or your partner gets:
Income Support, or
Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, or
Pension Credit guarantee credit;
- Are entitled to, or named on, a valid HS tax credit exemption certificate;
- Are named on a valid HC2 certificate.
Partial help: if you are named on a valid HC3 certificate you might get some help.
NOTE: If your glasses or contact lenses cost more than your voucher value, you will have to pay the difference.

War pensioners – read page 26.

HS VOUCHERS FOR REPAIR OR REPLACEMENT OF GLASSES OR CONTACT LENSES

You can get vouchers if you:

- Are under 16;
If you are 16 or over conditions apply – read page 23.

PAYMENT OF NECESSARY TRAVEL COSTS TO HOSPITAL FOR HS TREATMENT

You can get help if you:

- Are a war pensioner and the hospital treatment is for your pensionable disablement;
- Are getting, or your partner gets (includes your dependent children):
Income Support, or
Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, or
Pension Credit guarantee credit;
- Are entitled to, or named on, a valid HS tax credit exemption certificate;
- Are named on a valid HC2 certificate.

Children under 16 and those aged 16 to 18 – read page 25.

Partial help: if you are named on a valid HC3 certificate you might get some help.

FREE HS WIG AND FABRIC SUPPORTS

You can get free HS wigs and fabric supports if you:

- Are under 16;
- Are in full-time education and aged 16, 17 or 18;
- Are a hospital in-patient;
- Are a war pensioner and the wig or fabric support is for your pensionable disablement and you have a valid war pension exemption certificate;

- Are getting or your partner gets:
Income Support, or
Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, or
Pension Credit guarantee credit;
- Are entitled to, or named on, a valid HS tax
credit exemption certificate;
- Are named on a valid HC2 certificate.
Partial help: if you are named on a valid HC3
certificate you might get some help.

ALL CHILDREN UNDER 16 AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN FULL TIME EDUCATION WHO ARE UNDER 19

Full-time education means you must be receiving full-time instruction from a recognised educational establishment such as a school, college or university. To be a 'recognised establishment' the place where you are studying must have a Department of Education Establishment Number, and be registered on the Department of Education database. If it is not registered with the Department of Education, you still may be able to claim for help with health costs under the HS Low Income Scheme – read page 17.

You get free:

- HS prescriptions;
- HS dental treatment for any course of treatment that starts before your 19th birthday;
- HS sight tests;
- HS wigs and fabric supports.

You also get:

- Vouchers towards the cost of glasses or contact lenses;
- If you have lost or damaged your glasses or contact lenses – read page 23;
- If you need help with travel costs to and from hospital for HS treatment – read page 25.

OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE

You get free:

- HS dental treatment for any course of treatment which starts before your 18th birthday;
- If you need help with travel costs to and from the hospital for HS treatment – read page 25;
- If you don't have much money to pay other health costs, you can still claim for help, read – page 17.

PEOPLE AGED 60 OR OVER

You get free:

- HS prescriptions;
- HS sight tests.

If you need help with other health costs, check to see if you fit into any of the groups on pages 4-5.



PEOPLE GETTING THE FOLLOWING BENEFITS:

Either you or your partner may be getting the benefit or credit.

INCOME SUPPORT (IS)

You and your partner get free:

- HS prescriptions;
- HS dental treatment;
- HS sight tests;
- HS wigs and fabric supports.

You also get:

- A voucher towards the cost of glasses or contact lenses;
- Refunds of necessary travel costs to and from hospital for HS treatment for you, your partner and any dependent children and young people under 19.

If you are waiting for your IS claim to be settled and need help urgently with any health costs – read page 17.

PENSION CREDIT GUARANTEE CREDIT (PCGC)

Pension Credit guarantee credit replaced Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) on 6th October 2003. If you get PCGC read the information for people who get Income Support.

If you are aged under 60 and your partner gets PCGC, you should also read the Income Support information.

IMPORTANT: If you only get Pension Credit savings credit on its own, this does not entitle you to help with health costs. If you have to pay health costs, check to see if you are in any of the other groups listed on pages 4-5. Or you might be able to get help if you are on a low income – read page 17.

INCOME-BASED JOB SEEKER'S ALLOWANCE – JSA (IB)

You and your partner are entitled to the same things as people getting Income Support. If you get JSA (IB) read the information for people who get Income Support.

CONTRIBUTION-BASED JSA – JSA(C)

IMPORTANT: On its own, JSA(C) does not entitle you to help with health costs. If you have to pay health costs, check to see if you are in any of the groups listed on pages 4-5. Or you might be able to get help if you are on a low income – read page 17.

If you are not sure about the type of JSA you are getting, ask at your Social Security Office/Job and Benefits Office.

If you are waiting for your JSA claim to be settled and need help urgently with any health costs, read page 17.

OTHER BENEFITS

Only IS, PCGC or JSA (IB) count for automatic help with health costs.

Other benefits such as Incapacity Benefit or Disability Living Allowance don't count because they are not income-related. If you have to pay health costs, check to see if you are in any of the other groups listed on pages 4-5. Or you might be able to get help if you are on a low income – read page 17.

TAX CREDITS

- Working Tax Credit (WTC)
- Child Tax Credit (CTC)

From 6 April 2003, these replaced Working Families' Tax Credit and Disabled Person's Tax Credit.

1. If you meet the qualifying conditions you will be

sent a HS tax credit exemption certificate by the Prescription Pricing Authority (PPA) Newcastle Upon Tyne. They will send you one automatically, you do not need to apply for one.

2. If you meet the qualifying conditions you can get free:

- HS prescriptions;
- HS dental treatment;
- HS sight tests;
- HS wigs and fabric supports.

You also get:

- Vouchers towards the cost of glasses or contact lenses;
- Refunds of necessary travel costs to and from hospital for HS treatment for you, your partner or any dependent children and young people under 19. You can also get refunds of travel costs if any of the children named on the certificate need to go to hospital. (They are already entitled to the other help.)

3. The qualifying conditions for help with health costs are (A) + either (B1) or (B2) or (B3) when:

(A) your family income for tax credits is £14,200** or less (this is on your tax credit award notice) and one of the following applies:

(B1) you are working and have children = you get WTC and CTC, or

(B2) you are working and disabled = you get WTC with a disability element – check your award notice, or

(B3) you are not eligible for WTC but get CTC. This might be because you don't work 16 hours per week, or your income doesn't count as earnings, e.g. because you are a student nurse.

** The £14,200 limit applies from 6 April 2003. If you are reading this after 5 April 2004, you should check to see if this figure has been updated.

4. The Inland Revenue issues tax credit award notices that tell families they might be entitled to other help. Only the Inland Revenue can say whether you are eligible or not for WTC or CTC.

5. If you are unsure about the amount of your income, you can check this with the Inland Revenue Helpline on: 0845 603 2000.

For people with hearing or speech difficulties the Helpline numbers are as follows:

0845 607 6078 (Textphone)

0800 731 1888 (Typetalk)

If you have made a claim but not yet received your tax credit award notice you should contact the Inland Revenue (not the Prescription Pricing Authority).

IF YOU DON'T HAVE A NEW TAX CREDIT AWARD

6. If you meet the conditions for help - read paragraph 3, you are entitled to claim exemption as soon as you get your tax credit award notice. You can sign HS treatment forms to say you don't have to pay because you get tax credits, otherwise you will have to pay and then if you qualify for help you can claim a refund.

HS TAX CREDIT EXEMPTION CERTIFICATES

7. The Prescription Pricing Authority (PPA) – an NHS body based in Newcastle Upon Tyne – sends out certificates for the whole of the UK on behalf of the health departments in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. You don't have to make a separate application for a certificate.

(Please expect to wait up to six weeks for your certificate after you get your award notice.)

8. The Inland Revenue will send information to the PPA each month about families who are entitled to a certificate.

9. The PPA cannot send you an exemption

certificate until they receive the information from the Inland Revenue. This could be up to six weeks after you get your tax credit award.

You can still get free treatment without the exemption certificate - read paragraph 6.

If you are still unsure about whether or not you are entitled to a HS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate, ring the PPA on 0845 609 9299, and have your Tax Credit Award notice ready so you can tell the PPA what is on it.

IF YOU LOSE YOUR TAX CREDIT EXEMPTION CERTIFICATE

10. Tell the PPA by writing to the:

Exemption Issue Office, PO Box 1011,
Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE99 2ZP, and let them know what happened. They will send you a duplicate.

IF YOU DO NOT QUALIFY FOR HELP THROUGH TAX CREDIT EXEMPTION

11. Tax credit exemption is for people who are working or are disabled or who have children.

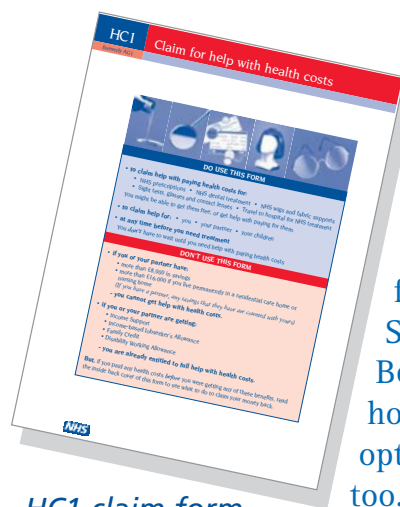
12. If you do not qualify for help through tax credits you may be able to claim help through the HS Low Income Scheme – please see below.

13. Ring the Inland Revenue Helpline for advice about other help that might be available through tax credits. Read paragraphs 4 and 5.

THE HS LOW INCOME SCHEME

The Low Income Scheme doesn't entitle you to HS treatment. However if you have been accepted for HS treatment and have to pay for any of the items listed on page 2 of this leaflet, the HS Low Income Scheme may be able to help you with the cost. If you have capital which is over the capital limits as shown on claim form HC1, you cannot claim any help through this scheme.

If you have a partner, their property, savings and any other money is counted with yours.



If you would like to find out if the scheme can help you, pick up an HC1 form (claim for help with health costs) from your local Social Security office/Job and Benefits office or HS hospital. Your dentist or optician may have copies too.

HC1 claim form

If you are aged 16 or over you can make your own claim on an HC1, but you needn't do this if you count as a dependant of someone who is getting an eligible benefit or credit listed on pages 13-17.

If a dependent child under 16 has to go to hospital for HS treatment, you can claim help with their travel costs; it's your income that counts.

Fill in the HC1 and send it off in the envelope that comes with it. The claim form tells you what to do and may ask you to send in evidence of your income.

If you have any queries about how to fill in this form, or what to send, you can contact your local Social Security office/Job and Benefits office.

After you have sent off the claim form, the information you have supplied is used to work out how much help you might get towards your health costs. The HC1 tells you more about this and explains what counts as income.

HS LOW INCOME SCHEME CERTIFICATES

If you qualify for help you will be sent a HS certificate HC2 for full help or a HS certificate HC3 for partial help with health costs. The certificate will tell you who it covers and how long it lasts.

If you need help urgently with any health costs before Income Support, Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Pension Credit or tax credits are awarded, make a separate claim on an HC1. Don't wait for your benefit or credit claim to be settled. But if you have a tax credit award notice, read pages 14-17 to see if you can get help without making a low income claim.

If you don't want to delay your HS treatment or repair/replacement of glasses (but read page 22 first) or need emergency HS dental treatment, you may need to pay and claim a refund later.

If you want to claim a refund of any health cost – read pages 30-33.

Other Groups

PEOPLE WITH A SPECIFIED MEDICAL CONDITION

You can get free HS prescriptions if you have a valid medical exemption certificate issued by the Central Services Agency (CSA) because you have:

- A permanent fistula (for example, caecostomy, colostomy, laryngostomy or ileostomy) requiring continuous surgical dressing or requiring an appliance;
- A form of hypoadrenalism (for example, Addison's Disease) for which specific substitution therapy is essential;
- Diabetes insipidus and other forms of hypopituitarism;
- Diabetes mellitus except where treatment is by diet alone;
- Hypoparathyroidism;
- Myasthenia gravis;
- Myxoedema;
- Epilepsy requiring continuous anti-convulsive therapy; or
- You have a continuing physical disability which means you cannot go out without the help of another person.

We ask doctors to advise you about free prescriptions. But it is up to you to find out if you are entitled or not.

Only the conditions listed count. If you are unsure about the name of your condition, check with your doctor.

To apply for a medical exemption certificate ask your doctor for form HC11B. The form tells you what to do.

Your exemption certificate will be posted to you. Medical exemption certificates normally last for five years and then need to be renewed.

You may receive a reminder that your certificate needs to be renewed. But it is your responsibility to ensure that it is renewed.

SEXUALLY TRANSMISSABLE INFECTIONS (STI)

If you are being treated for an STI at a HS hospital, medication to treat the STI is free from the hospital. You will have to pay charges in the normal way for anything else you are prescribed.

PEOPLE WHO NEED LOTS OF PRESCRIPTIONS BUT HAVE TO PAY

PRESCRIPTION PREPAYMENT CERTIFICATES (PPC)

If you are not entitled to free prescriptions and you think you will have to pay for more than 5 items in 4 months or 14 items in 12 months, you may find it cheaper to buy a prescription prepayment certificate (PPC).

You can buy a PPC from most pharmacies.



PPC start date

The PPC will start from the date your application is bought unless you ask for a different start date. The start date can not be more than 7 days before or 1 month after you buy it.

PREGNANT WOMEN AND THOSE WHO HAVE HAD A BABY IN THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS

You get free:

- HS prescriptions but only if you have a valid maternity exemption certificate issued by the Central Services Agency (CSA).

To apply for your maternity exemption certificate get form HC11A from your doctor, midwife or health visitor. The form tells you what to do.

- Dental treatment if, when you are accepted for a course of treatment, you are pregnant or have borne a child in the previous 12 months.

PEOPLE REGISTERED BLIND OR PARTIALLY SIGHTED

You get free HS sight tests. If you need help with other health costs, check if you are in one of the groups listed on pages 4-5.

PEOPLE WHO NEED COMPLEX LENSES

You get free HS sight tests if you're prescribed complex or powerful glasses with at least one lens which:

- Has a power in any one meridian of plus or minus 10 or more dioptries; or
- Is a prism-controlled bifocal lens.

You also get a voucher towards the cost of glasses.

PEOPLE WITH GLAUCOMA OR DIABETES

You can get a free sight test if you are:

- A diagnosed glaucoma patient; or
- 40 and over and are the parent, brother, sister, son or daughter of a person with diagnosed glaucoma; or
- Have been advised by an ophthalmologist that you are at risk of glaucoma; or
- A diagnosed diabetic.

PEOPLE WHO HAVE LOST OR DAMAGED THEIR GLASSES OR CONTACT LENSES

If you are under 16 you get a voucher towards the cost of repair or replacement.

If you are 16 or over you may be entitled to a voucher towards the cost of repair or replacement if the Central Services Agency (CSA) agrees that:

- The loss or damage was due to illness; and
- You can't get any help through a warranty, insurance or after sales service; and
- You would be entitled to an HS voucher for glasses or contact lenses – read page 8.

PEOPLE WITH IMPAIRED HEARING

You can get free on loan HS hearing aids. The aids will be supplied with batteries (and replacements) and fitted, serviced and maintained free of charge.

If you want to know more, ask your GP.

PEOPLE IN CARE HOMES

Living in a care home does not automatically entitle you to help.

- If you are under 60 and getting Income Support – read page 13.
- If you are 60 or over and getting Pension Credit guarantee credit – read page 13.
- Otherwise check to see if you can get help via the HS Low Income Scheme – read page 17.

HS IN-PATIENTS

You get free:

- All HS treatment, including dental treatment, plus medication;
- Wigs and fabric supports supplied while in hospital;
- Glasses or contact lenses supplied through the hospital eye department (but you must choose the cheapest frame available). If you choose a more expensive one (except for medical reasons) you will have to pay the difference;
- Medication to take home with you when you leave hospital. If you ask a dentist or optician to visit you in hospital, you will have to pay the cost in the normal way, as if you were being treated at their practice. Read pages 4 and 5 to see if you are in a group that can get free HS dental treatment, a free HS sight test or vouchers towards your glasses.

HS OUT-PATIENTS

You get free:

- All medication given to take while you're being treated at the hospital. But you pay a prescription charge(s) for any medication you are prescribed to take at home, unless you're entitled to free HS prescriptions.
- Medication supplied by a hospital to treat a sexually transmissible infection (STI).

HS HOSPITAL DENTAL PATIENTS

HS dental treatment carried out at the hospital is free, but there may be a charge for dentures and bridges unless you are entitled to free HS dental treatment.

HS HOSPITAL EYE DEPARTMENT

Sight tests. If your consultant refers you to an optometrist for a sight test as part of the management of your eye condition, while you are

still a patient of the hospital eye department, that sight test is free. If your consultant decides that for clinical reasons you need frequent changes of glasses or contact lenses you will only have to pay for the first pair. You may also get help towards the first pair if you are in one of the groups entitled to a voucher – read page 8.

PEOPLE WHO TRAVEL TO HOSPITAL FOR HS TREATMENT

You may be entitled to help with necessary travelling costs to and from hospital for HS treatment. This includes check-ups and visits to clinics for treatment of sexually transmissible infections.

- If you are getting benefits or credits – read page 13;
- If you have a low income – read page 17;
- For your companion if you qualify for help and, for medical reasons, you need a companion to travel with you. Their travel costs are added to your travel costs and it's your income that counts;
- If you are 16 or over but under 19 and are counted as a dependant of someone getting any of the benefits/credits (page 13). Otherwise you can make your own claim, even if you live with your parents – read page 17.



Note: If a child under 16 is the patient, it is their parent's income that counts. If someone else takes them to hospital, it is still the parents' income that counts.

If you are not sure what travel costs you can get help with, ask the hospital before you travel.

WAR PENSIONERS

You get free:

- HS prescriptions and HS wigs and fabric supports if the treatment is for your pensionable disablement and you have a valid war pension exemption certificate.
You may be able to get money back for dental treatment, hospital travel costs, sight tests, glasses or contact lenses if the treatment, or the reason for travel, is for your pensionable disablement.

PEOPLE FROM ABROAD

People seeking asylum and who are supported by the National Asylum Support Services (NASS) will be sent an HS charges certificate (HC2) for full help with their first support payments.

Other people who come from abroad and are accepted as ordinarily resident in the UK (including asylum seekers not supported by NASS) and who are accepted for HS treatment may claim help with health costs the same way as other residents.

Check to see if you are in one of the groups listed on pages 4-5. Otherwise, you can make a claim under the HS Low Income Scheme – read page 17.

HOW TO GET HELP WITH HEALTH COSTS

HS PRESCRIPTIONS

People who don't have to pay should put a cross in the first box in Part 1 that applies to them and complete and sign Part 3 on the back of their prescription form HS21. You may be asked to show

proof of your entitlement to free prescriptions – read page 34 for more information about this.

HS DENTAL TREATMENT:

Tell the dentist you want HS treatment when you make the appointment. Sign the form you are given when you go for treatment. If you don't have to pay put a cross in the appropriate box.

If you have a valid HC3 certificate the maximum your certificate says you can pay. You will pay either what appears on the certificate, the actual charge or the maximum charge, whichever is the least. See leaflet HC12 for details of charges.

If your circumstances change before you are asked to pay, read page 7 to see if you are entitled to free HS dental treatment.

You may be asked to show proof of your entitlement to help with dental costs – read page 38 for more information about this.

SIGHT TESTS

When you go for your sight test, tell the optician if you are entitled to a free HS sight test and ask for form GOS (NI) ST to apply for it.

- If you have a valid HC2 certificate for full help, you must show it to your optician;
- If you are blind or partially sighted, the name and address of the Health and Social Services Board where you're registered has to be put on form GOS (NI) ST;
- If you have diabetes or glaucoma, or have been advised by an ophthalmologist that you are at risk of glaucoma, the name and address of your doctor has to be put on form GOS (NI) ST;
- If you already need a complex lens, show the optician your last prescription or the glasses you are wearing.

The optician will give you form GOS (NI) P showing the results of your sight test.

If you have a valid HC3 Certificate, show it to the optician and ask if you are entitled to any help with the cost of your private sight test. You apply for this help on form GOS (NI) STC.

HS VOUCHERS FOR GLASSES/CONTACT LENSES

There is more information about using vouchers on the back of your GOS (NI) P form.

Ask for a GOS (NI) V voucher form when you have your sight test, or when you order your glasses or contact lenses if you didn't ask for one earlier, or if you are now entitled to one. Not all suppliers have GOS (NI) V vouchers and you might have to go back to the person who tested your sight to get one. Fill in part 1 when you order your glasses or contact lenses and show the optician a valid HC2 certificate if you have one.

If you have a valid HC3 certificate, you can ask for a GOS (NI) V voucher form. Show your HC3 to the optician when you order glasses or contact lenses and ask if you can get any help towards the cost. Your voucher value will be reduced by the amount shown on your HC3.

A GOS (NI) V voucher form is valid for two years, but you can only use it if you are still entitled to a voucher for glasses or contact lenses when you order them.

If you have a valid HC2 or HC3 certificate, you must show it to the optician when you order your glasses or contact lenses. They will ask you to fill in and sign GOS (NI) V to say why you are entitled to the voucher and to confirm that you have received your glasses or contact lenses.

HS VOUCHERS FOR REPAIR OR REPLACEMENT OF GLASSES OR CONTACT LENSES

Ask your optician for form GOS (NI) R – it tells you what to do.

TRAVEL TO AND FROM HOSPITAL FOR HS TREATMENT

When you go for treatment, tell the hospital that you want to claim back the cost of your journey and show proof of your entitlement such as your benefit book, your tax credit exemption certificate or your HC2 certificate.

If you have a valid HC3 certificate and your journeys cost more in total in any one week than your certificate says you have to pay, show the HC3 certificate at the hospital and ask if you are entitled to any money back.

HS WIGS AND FABRIC SUPPORTS:

Tell the person who fits your wig or fabric support that you are entitled to it free, and show proof of your entitlement or war pension exemption certificate.

If you have a valid HC3 certificate, show it to the person who fits your wig or fabric support and ask if you are entitled to any help with the charge. For each item, the most you will pay will be the amount on the certificate or the actual cost – whichever is the least.

CHECK OF ENTITLEMENT TO HELP WITH HEALTH COSTS AND THE PENALTY CHARGE

If you are not paying the HS charge, or you are using an optical voucher, you should show proof of why you don't have to pay or why you can use a voucher. For example, your benefit book, birth certificate or HS exemption certificate; for more information about this – read the tables on pages 34-45.

If you cannot show proof, you will get your HS treatment free, or be able to use your optical voucher, but your treatment form will be marked as “no evidence seen” so entitlement can be checked later.

CHECKS ON HS CLAIMS

- Checks for free prescriptions, full or partial help with HS dental treatment, free HS sight tests and vouchers towards the cost of glasses or contact lenses will all be made by the Central Services Agency (CSA) (Counter Fraud Unit).

THE PENALTY CHARGE

Any patient found to have wrongly claimed help with health costs will now face penalty charges and, in some cases, prosecution under new powers introduced by the Health and Personal Social Services (Penalty Charge) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2002.

The penalty charge is a civil fine and may be imposed where a patient is found to have wrongly claimed total or partial help with health costs. The penalty charge is five times the amount owed, up to a maximum of £100. This is in addition to the original charge. Payment will be pursued by civil recovery if necessary.

For further information about Penalty Charges pick up leaflet “Dont Just Help Yourself - HS Penalty Charges Explained” from your GP, pharmacist, dentist or optician. Or got to: www.csa.n-i.nhs.uk and click on “Counter Fraud Unit” and go to “Fixed Penalty Charges Scheme”.

REFUNDS

REFUNDS OF PRESCRIPTION PREPAYMENT CERTIFICATE (PPC) FEES

You can only get a full refund if, within the first month of a 4 or 12 month PPC, any of the following happens:

- You become entitled to free prescriptions and if applicable, you have a valid HS exemption certificate; or
- You go into hospital and remain there until the expiry of the certificate; or
- The PPC holder dies, or goes into hospital and dies there before the certificate runs out.

Proportional refunds: 4 and 12 month PPCs

You can get a proportional refund if, after the first month of a 4 or 12-month PPC start date:

- The PPC holder dies; or
- Goes into hospital and dies there before the certificate runs out.

The fee will be refunded proportionally in respect of complete months unexpired.

Partial refunds: 12 month PPCs

You can get a partial refund for 12-month PPCs only if, in months 2-4 of the PPC start date, any of the following happens:

- You become entitled to free prescriptions; and if applicable, you have a valid HS exemption certificate; or
- You go into hospital and remain there until the expiry of the certificate.

You will be refunded the cost of the 12-month PPC less the cost of a four-month PPC.

If you wish to claim a refund for any of the reasons listed, send the original certificate to the Central Services Agency (CSA) explaining why the refund is claimed.

Time limit for making PPC refund claims

You must make your claim for a refund within the following time limits:

- Following the death of the PPC holder – claim within 24 months of death.
- If you become entitled to free prescriptions:
- 4 four-month PPC holders: within four months of the start of the PPC;
- 12-month PPC holders: within seven months of the start of the PPC.
- You go into hospital and remain there until the certificate expires: within three months of the PPC expiry date.

REFUND OF HS PRESCRIPTION CHARGES

Ask your pharmacist or doctor for a HS receipt form PS7 **when you pay** – you can't get one later. The receipt form tells you what to do. You have to apply for a refund within 3 months of paying the prescription charge.

OTHER REFUNDS

You will need a receipt which shows you have paid for HS treatment (see following paragraphs for details). For income based claims, use form HC5

available from a Social Security office/Job and Benefits office or HS hospital. Your dentist or optician may have one. The HC5 tells you what to do. You will need to write a letter (enclosing your receipt) to apply for a refund for other reasons, details below. You have to claim a refund within 3 months of paying the health cost.

HS DENTAL TREATMENT REFUNDS

Ask your dentist for a receipt which shows the amount and the date you paid the charge.

If you are claiming on the grounds of low income complete form HC5.

Your claim will go to the Central Services Agency (CSA) who will check before sending out payment.

If you want to claim a refund for another reason eg. you confirm you are pregnant, you will need to explain why you are claiming a refund. Enclose your receipt and make sure you include your full name and the address of your dentist, and write to:

Central Services Agency
25 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8FH

SIGHT TEST REFUNDS

Ask the person who tests your sight for a receipt that shows that you paid for the test and the date of payment. Complete an HC5 refund claim form, making sure you put the date of your sight test on it. The HC5 tells you what to do next.

Glasses or contact lens refunds

If you have already used a voucher towards the cost of your glasses or lenses you cannot get a refund, unless it was only a “complex lens” voucher. Nor can you claim a refund of the difference between the voucher value and the actual cost of your glasses or lenses, even if they cost more than the voucher value.

If you want to claim a refund, ask the person who supplies your glasses or contact lenses for a receipt which shows how much you paid and the date of payment. Complete an HC5 refund form and make sure you enclose your optical prescription and your receipt with your HC5 when you send it off. The form tells you what to do. The maximum refund you can get back will be the voucher value which matches your prescription.

Lost or damaged glasses or contact lenses

If your glasses or contact lenses have been lost or damaged and you pay for replacement or repairs, you will only be considered for a refund if you are entitled to a voucher. But the Central Services Agency (CSA) has to agree that the loss or damage was due to illness before payment can be made – read page 23.

TRAVEL COSTS TO AND FROM HOSPITAL FOR HS TREATMENT REFUNDS

Usually, an HS hospital will give you your refund when you go for treatment. If this is not possible, ask the hospital for an HC5 refund claim form – the form tells you what to do.

HS WIGS AND FABRIC SUPPORTS REFUNDS

Ask the hospital for a receipt that shows that you have paid an HS charge, and complete an HC5 refund claim form, the form tells you what do.

For people entitled to free HS prescri

You can get free HS prescriptions if you are:	The proof you need to have
60 or over under 16	A date-of-birth printed on your prescription. If it is not on your prescription, show your HS medical card, current Child Benefit order book, retirement pension book, passport, birth certificate, driving licence, travel concession card or any other official papers showing your name and date-of-birth.
aged 16-18 in full-time education	A current Child Benefit order book. If you do not get Child Benefit, you can show proof of your date-of-birth (which might be on your prescription – see above) and proof that you are a full-time student.
pregnant, or you have had a baby in the last 12 months	A maternity exemption certificate (HS151).
named on a valid medical exemption certificate	A medical exemption certificate (HS151).
a war pensioner	A war pension exemption certificate.
named on a valid prescription pre-payment certificate	A current certificate of pre-payment of Charges (HS155).
named on a valid HC2 certificate	A HC2 certificate for full help with health costs.
(or your partner is), getting Income Support	Your Income Support order book, or an entitlement letter from your local Social Security office/Jobs and Benefits office.

Where and how to get proof
<p>HS medical cards are given out when you are first registered as a patient with a GP. If you need a new card, contact the Central Services Agency (CSA).</p>
<p>The Child Benefit Office. 028 90549 000 Your school, college, university or local education and library board can supply evidence of educational status.</p>
<p>Ask your GP, midwife or health visitor for a signed HC11A application form. Complete it and send it to the Central Services Agency (CSA).</p>
<p>Ask your GP, or HS hospital for a signed HC11B application form. Complete it and send it to the Central Services Agency (CSA).</p>
<p>The War Pensions Agency.</p>
<p>Can be bought from pharmacies. The current amounts to pay are shown in leaflet HC12.</p>
<p>Claim using form HC1, obtainable from your local Social Security office/Jobs and Benefits office. You may also be able to get a HC1 from your local hospital, dentist, optician or doctor.</p>
<p>Your local Social Security office/Jobs and Benefits office (address in local telephone book).</p>

For people entitled to free HS prescri

You can get free HS prescriptions if you are:	The proof you need to have
	<p>People who have their Income Support paid into the bank or building society may not have any proof. Do not worry as a note will be made of your claim and it will be checked later.</p>
(or your partner is), getting Pension Credit guarantee credit (PCGC)	<p>Your PCGC order book, or an entitlement letter from the Social Security Agency.</p> <p>People who have their PCGC paid into the bank or building society may not have any proof. Do not worry as a note will be made of your claim and it will be checked later.</p>
(or your partner is), getting Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance	<p>An entitlement letter from your local Social Security office/Jobs and Benefits office.</p> <p>People who have their Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance paid into the bank or building society may not have any proof. Do not worry as a note will be made of your claim and it will be checked later.</p>
(or your partner is), getting tax credits and meeting qualifying conditions	<p>The Tax Credit Office will send a separate exemption certificate to those entitled to exemption from HS prescription charges. The certificate will tell you how long it lasts and the people who can get free HS treatment will be named on it. Use this certificate as proof instead of your award notice.</p>

Where and how to get proof

Contact the Social Security Agency, Pensions Service, Po Box 205, Londonderry, BT48 6ZD. Telephone 080 81006165

Your local Social Security office/Jobs and Benefits office (address in local telephone book).

The Tax Credit Office will arrange to have your exemption certificate issued via the Prescription Pricing Authority (PPA).

For people entitled to free HS dental

You can get free HS dental treatment if you are:	The proof you need to have
under 18 years old	Any official document showing your name and date-of -birth, such as HS medical card, birth certificate, passport, driving licence, travel concession card, or Child Benefit order book.
aged 18 and in full-time education	A current Child Benefit order book, or evidence of age as above and a letter or other document from your school, college or university stating that you are a full-time student.
pregnant	MatB1 certificate, or HS151 maternity exemption certificate.
Have had a baby in the previous 12 months, or have had a stillborn baby in the previous 12 months	Notification of Birth form, Birth Certificate, or Stillbirth Certificate.
named on a valid HC2 certificate	A HC2 certificate for full help with health costs.
named on a valid HC3 certificate	The charge may be reduced if you are named on a HS Low Income Scheme certificate HC3 for limited help.
(or your partner is), getting Income Support	<p>Your Income Support order book, or an entitlement letter from your local Social Security office/Jobs and Benefits office.</p> <p>People who have their Income Support paid into the bank or building society may not have any proof. Do not worry as a note will be made of your claim and it will be checked later.</p>

Where and how to get proof

HS medical cards are given out when you are first registered as a patient with a GP. If you need a new card, contact the Central Services Agency (CSA).

The Child Benefit Office. 028 90549 000
Your school, college, university or local education and library board can supply evidence of educational status.

MatB1 certificates are issued by your GP or registered midwife. To get a HS151 exemption certificate ask your GP, hospital doctor or midwife for application form HC11A and send it to the Central Services Agency (CSA).

The midwife who delivers your baby will give you a Notification of Birth form. Birth Certificates and Stillbirth Certificates are issued by your local Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

Claim using form HC1, obtainable from your local Social Security office/Jobs and Benefits office. You may also be able to get a HC1 from your local hospital, dentist, optician or doctor.

Claim using form HC1, obtainable from your local Social Security office/Jobs and Benefits office. You may also be able to get a HC1 from your local hospital, dentist, optician or doctor.

Your local Social Security office/Jobs and Benefits office (address in local telephone book).

For people entitled to free HS dental

You can get free HS dental treatment if you are:	The proof you need to have
(or your partner is), getting Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance	<p>An entitlement letter from your local Social Security office/Jobs and Benefits office.</p> <p>People who have their Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance paid into the bank or building society may not have any proof. Do not worry as a note will be made of your claim and it will be checked later.</p>
(or your partner is), getting Pension Credit guarantee credit (PCGC)	<p>Your PCGC order book, or an entitlement letter from the Social Security Agency.</p> <p>People who have their PCGC paid into the bank or building society may not have any proof. Do not worry as a note will be made of your claim and it will be checked later.</p>
(or your partner is), getting tax credits and meeting qualifying conditions	<p>The Tax Credit Office will send a separate exemption certificate to those entitled to exemption from HS dental charges. The certificate will tell you how long it lasts and the people who can get free HS treatment will be named on it. Use this certificate as proof instead of your award notice.</p>

Where and how to get proof

Your local Social Security office/Jobs and Benefits office
(address in local telephone book).

Contact the Social Security Agency, Pensions Service, Po Box
205, Londonderry, BT48 6ZD. Telephone 080 81006165

The Tax Credit Office will arrange to have your exemption
certificate issued via the Prescription Pricing Authority (PPA).

You can get a free HS sight test if you are:	The proof you need to have
aged 60 or over	Any official document showing your name and date-of-birth such as a birth certificate, HS medical card, passport, travel concession card, driving licence, state retirement pension book.
aged 40 or over and the parent, brother, sister, or child of a person with glaucoma	An official document to prove your date-of-birth – see above.
registered blind or partially sighted	Certificate of registration as blind or partially sighted.
suffering from diabetes	Repeat prescriptions card, out-patients appointment card, record of blood sugar readings.
suffering from glaucoma	Statement that you are a glaucoma sufferer.
considered to be at risk of glaucoma	Statement that you are at risk of developing glaucoma.
You can get a free HS sight test and an optical voucher if	
aged under 16	A Child Benefit order book, HS medical card, passport, birth certificate, travel concession card, showing your name and date of birth.
aged 16, 17 or 18 and in full-time education	A current Child Benefit order book, or evidence of age as above and a letter or other document from your school, college or university stating that you are a full-time student.

Where and how to get proof
<p>To get a new HS medical card you should contact the Central Services Agency (CSA).</p>
<p>HS medical card – see above.</p>
<p>Contact your local Health and Social Services Board (address in local telephone book).</p>
<p>Your GP, or your hospital diabetic or eye clinic. Your repeat prescription or outpatient card should show you are attending a diabetic clinic on a regular basis.</p>
<p>Your GP, or your hospital eye clinic.</p>
<p>Your GP, or your hospital eye clinic.</p>
If you are:
<p>The Child Benefit Office. 028 90549 000 HS medical card – see above.</p>
<p>The Child Benefit Office. 028 90549 000 Your school, college, university or local education and library board can supply evidence of educational status.</p>

You can get a free HS sight test and optical voucher if you are:	The proof you need to have
(or your partner is), getting Income Support	Your Income Support order book, or an entitlement letter from your local Social Security office/Jobs and Benefits office.
(or your partner is), getting income-based Jobseeker's Allowance	An entitlement letter from your local Social Security office/Jobs and Benefits office.
(or your partner is), getting Pension Credit guarantee credit	<p>Your PCGC order book, or an entitlement letter from the Social Security Agency.</p> <p>People who have their PCGC paid into the bank or building society may not have any proof. Do not worry as a note will be made of your claim and it will be checked later.</p>
(or your partner is), getting tax credits and meeting qualifying conditions	The Tax Credit Office will send a separate exemption certificate to those entitled to exemption from charges. The certificate will tell you how long it lasts and the people who can get free HS treatment will be named on it. Use this certificate as proof instead of your award notice.
named on a valid HC2 certificate	A HC2 certificate for full help with health costs.
named on a valid HC3 certificate	You may get help if you are named on a HS Low Income Scheme certificate HC3 for limited help.

Where and how to get proof

Your local Social Security office/Jobs and Benefits office (address in local telephone book).

People who have their benefit paid into the bank or building society may not have any proof. Do not worry as a note will be made of your claim and it will be checked later.

Contact the Social Security Agency, Pensions Service, Po Box 205, Londonderry, BT48 6ZD. Telephone 080 81006165

The Tax Credit Office will arrange to have your exemption certificate issued via the Prescription Pricing Authority (PPA).

Make a claim using form HC1, obtainable from your local Social Security office/Jobs and Benefits office or you may also be able to get one from your local hospital, dentist, optician or doctor.

If you need more information about health costs and similar subjects, these leaflets are available:

- **HC12 HS charges and optical voucher values** – from Social Security offices/Job and Benefits offices and HS hospitals. Dentists, opticians, pharmacists or doctors might also have them. Or go to: www.dhsspsni.gov.uk (Published Information - Finance - External Financial Guidance)
- **HC13 Advisers guide to help with health costs** – from Social Security offices/Job and Benefits offices
- **HC11 (this leaflet)** – from main Post Offices. Or go to: www.dhsspsni.gov.uk (Published Information - Finance - External Financial Guidance)
- **WMV:G1 (NI) Welfare milk and vitamins: a guide for families** – from Social Security offices/Job and Benefits offices.
- **T6 Health advice for travellers** – from Post Offices, travel agents and by phoning the Health Literature line free on 0800 555 777.

HEALTH COST ADVICE LINES

Health Service Charges Advice Line –
0800 587 8982

HS Tax Credit Exemption Certificates
(Please have your tax credit award notice ready to answer questions): 0845 609 9299
Does not deal with enquiries about tax credit applications or entitlement to an award notice.

OTHER ADVICE LINES

Inland Revenue – Tax Credit helpline
For enquiries about applications or entitlement to Tax Credit Award Notices: 0845 603 2000.
For people with hearing or speech difficulties:
0845 607 6078 (Textphone)
0800 731 1888 (Typetalk)