

Resource

## Prescription charges

Prescription medications are free for patients in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In England, however, there is currently a charge per item which many people may have to pay if they are not eligible for free prescriptions. This can become expensive but there are options for spreading the cost through a pre-paid prescription certificate (PPC) or obtaining help with health care costs.

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There are some exemptions to paying prescription charges for specific conditions but unfortunately Rheumatoid Arthritis is not currently included in the exemption list of conditions. Other exemptions may apply in certain circumstances, these are listed below:

You can get free NHS prescriptions in England if, at the time the prescription is dispensed, you:

- are aged 60 or over, or under 16
- are aged 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

There are other exemptions for people on certain benefits. For more details please see the NHS Website.

[Web link](#)

[NHS Free Prescriptions](#)

Help with prescription costs

If you are not entitled to free prescriptions, there may still be options to help you to reduce your prescription costs. If you are on a low income, the NHS have a Low Income Scheme which is to help with all health care costs including free prescriptions. More details can be found here: <https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-low-income-scheme>

Many people with long-term conditions, such as RA, need multiple regular medications. Where this is the case and you are not eligible for any exemptions or low income help with costs, it is often cheaper to pay up-front (or via Direct Debit) for a 'prescription pre-payment certificate' known as a "PPC". This is a certificate which allows you to obtain as many prescriptions as needed within a specific date range. A PPC covers all your NHS prescriptions, including NHS dental prescriptions, no matter how many items you need. A PPC does not cover the cost of other health items, such as wigs and fabric supports.

PPCs can be obtained in either 3 month or 12 month durations. You will save money if you require more than 3 items in 3 months, or 11 items in 12 months.

Full and up-to-date details on how much a PPC costs, how to purchase and how much money it could save you, can be accessed below:

[Web link](#)



[Article](#)

[Prescription Charges Coalition](#)

[NRAS is working with the Prescription Charges Coalition to campaign to scrap prescription charges for people in England with long-term conditions.](#)

## Medicines in rheumatoid arthritis

We believe it is essential that people living with RA understand why certain medicines are used, when they are used and how they work to manage the condition.

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