

The next phase of EPS (Phase 4) is being introduced at GP practices in England. This will mean that almost all your prescriptions will be signed and sent electronically.

This fact sheet summarises the key things you and your team need to know before Phase 4 is switched on at your practice. All staff should have access to a copy of this information.



It is important that everyone working at your practice understands the changes and can explain these to your patients if they ask.

More detailed guidance and best practice information is available on the NHS Digital website and from your prescribing system supplier.



Patients without a nomination will automatically have their prescriptions sent electronically. A token (patients may refer to this as a 'paper copy') must be printed for these patients, even if you are prescribing remotely.



Without this token, patients will not be able to get their medication as the barcode needs to be scanned by the dispenser to retrieve the prescription from the NHS Spine.

What are the benefits of EPS Phase 4?

- Almost all prescriptions will be processed and signed electronically. In most cases, over 95% of prescriptions will be processed this way and only a small proportion will be hand-signed
- One main process for prescriptions will lead to a more efficient, faster and secure service
- If a patient without a nomination loses their token it can be easily reprinted, there is no need to re-issue the electronic prescription
- It will be possible to track more prescriptions using the EPS Prescription Tracker: www.digital.nhs.uk/epstracker

What will change for patients who already have a nomination?

More than 28 million patients already have a nomination. Their nomination will remain valid and

their prescriptions will still be sent electronically to their nominated dispenser.

Patients with a nomination may also choose to have a Phase 4 prescription if they don't wish to use their nomination for that prescription.

What will change for patients who do not have a nomination?

If a patient does not have a nomination, their prescription will also be sent electronically. You will need to print a token and this must be given to the patient, the patient's representative or their prescription collection service.

Tokens do not need a hand-written signature because the prescription is signed electronically.

The token contains a unique barcode and you should advise patients to take it to a pharmacy or DAC of their choice in England. The electronic prescription will remain on the NHS Spine until dispensing staff scan the token to retrieve it and begin the dispensing process.

EPS Phase 4 prescriptions are not affected if a patient sets or changes an EPS nomination after they have been issued. The token is still required for a dispenser to retrieve the prescription.

Exceptions

There are a few scenarios where a prescription won't be sent electronically and a paper hand-signed prescription will need to be produced, such as:

- If the prescription contains items that are not EPS compliant, such as non dm+d items and personally administered items
- If the patient is a dispensing patient and there is no EPS system available in the dispensary
- If the patient has their prescriptions dispensed in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland
- If, in the professional judgement of the prescriber, the welfare of the patient is likely to be in jeopardy unless a paper prescription is issued

Phase 4 prescriptions and tokens

Acute and repeat prescriptions

Acute prescriptions and repeats, where each is issued separately (not repeat dispensing) for patients without a nomination, require the patient be given a token each time a prescription is issued.

Repeat dispensing (RD) or batch prescribing

Electronic repeat dispensing (eRD) for patients with a nomination will not be affected by Phase 4.

If a patient is part way through a paper-based RD regime when Phase 4 is switched on, that batch will continue on paper until it is complete and the final issue dispensed. If a new batch is prescribed after this, it will be issued using eRD.

In Phase 4, eRD prescriptions for patients without a nomination are issued in the same way as eRD for those with a nomination.

Unlike a paper-based RD batch, patients without a nomination will receive one token which will cover the entire regime. They will need to present this to a dispenser at each issue.

Dispensers have access to the EPS Prescription Tracker and can use this to check the dispensed dates of previous issues to ensure patients are given the next issue of their medication only when it is appropriate. Patients can also speak to their local pharmacy or DAC about leaving this token with them if they would like them to dispense future issues in the batch.

If an eRD regime has been issued whilst a patient does not have a nomination, all issues will remain non-nominated, even if a nomination is set during the regime.

Existing paper prescriptions

All existing paper prescriptions that have not been dispensed will still be valid until their normal expiry date. These prescriptions do not need to be reissued electronically.

Remote prescribing

If you are prescribing remotely and the patient does not currently have an EPS nomination, you may wish to suggest that nomination may be suitable for them. This will allow you to send the prescription directly to their nominated dispenser.

If nomination is not suitable for the patient and they are present (such as during a home visit), you should hand write an FP10 and give it to the patient.

If the patient is not present, you should process the prescription electronically and ask someone at the practice to print out the token ready for collection.

Printer set up

Your practice will need to consider your processes for printing and how you will sort and file paper tokens. You may want to re-consider how your printers are routed and where paper tokens for patients without a nomination are printed.

For example, it may be better for some tokens to be printed in a consultation room and other tokens to be printed in the reception area.

Printer guidance specific to your prescribing system is available from your system supplier.

Print quality

Dispensers must be able to scan the barcode on tokens to be able to dispense. Please ensure you check the quality of printing on a regular basis.

Information about Phase 4 for patients

You will be provided with posters from your CCG which you will need to display prominently.

If you have a TV or digital display screen in your waiting room, we would also like you to display a digital version of the poster which is available at: www.digital.nhs.uk/EPSPHASE4

Patients can also find more information about EPS at www.nhs.uk/EPS