

To:
All GP Practices
All Community Pharmacists

Tel : 028 9536 3375
Fax : 028 9536 1166
Web Site : www.hscboard.hscni.net

27th October 2017

Dear Colleague,

Prescribing of FreeStyle Libre®

FreeStyle Libre® is a glucose monitoring technology which will be available on the Northern Ireland Drug Tariff from 1st November 2017. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with guidance on the prescribing and dispensing of this device in primary care.

What is FreeStyle Libre®?

- FreeStyle Libre® is a flash glucose monitoring (FGM) system, which measures glucose levels, using interstitial fluid levels rather than capillary blood glucose from finger prick testing.
- It consists of a handheld reader and a sensor, which is sited on the back of the arm. When the reader unit is passed over the sensor, the reader shows a reading based on interstitial fluid glucose levels. The sensor lasts for up to 14 days and then needs to be replaced.
- The reader can show a trace for the last 8 hours and displays an arrow showing the direction the glucose reading is heading. FGM is not the same as continuous glucose monitoring (CGM).
- It is licensed for patients over 4 years of age. In exceptional circumstances it may be used off licence for children under 4 years old, under the direction of a secondary care diabetes specialist.
- FreeStyle Libre® users will still need to do finger-prick blood tests prior to and during driving to **meet current DVLA requirements**, as FreeStyle Libre®, measures interstitial fluid levels and **not** capillary blood glucose levels.
- The cost of one sensor is £35.
- See Appendix 1 for images of FreeStyle Libre® reader and sensors.

Current guidance from NICE

A NICE Medtech Innovation Briefing (MIB110) FreeStyle Libre® for glucose monitoring was published in July 2017¹ which, in summary, advises that:

- All the current NICE diabetes guidelines include recommendations relating to finger-prick blood glucose testing and no recommendations are given on interstitial fluid glucose monitoring.
- It is unclear how the adoption of FreeStyle Libre® translates into fewer complications, reduced emergency admissions and less use of blood glucose test strips.

Prescribing of FreeStyle Libre®

Inclusion of this device in the Drug Tariff may have a major impact on the primary care prescribing budget. It is, therefore, important that prescribing is managed appropriately, particularly in the current absence of NICE guidance, to ensure that this technology is available to those whom are most likely to benefit. The NI Diabetes Network has agreed the following interim guidance on the prescribing of FreeStyle Libre®.

Initiation of Freestyle Libre®

Patients with type 1 diabetes (children and adults) may potentially benefit. HSC Trust specialist diabetes teams will assess patients for suitability. Suitable patients will require specific training from the Trust diabetes teams to ensure that they know how to use the device effectively in order to better manage their diabetes. Trust teams may make recommendations to GP practices to prescribe.

FreeStyle Libre® should NOT be initiated in Primary Care.

Review

Review will also be required to ensure that use of FreeStyle Libre® is proving beneficial for the individual patient. Trust diabetes teams will be responsible for review and outcomes of those reviews will be communicated to GP practices. In some cases this may be to advise that prescribing is discontinued.

Requests for prescriptions of Freestyle Libre®

Patients who present to primary care, requesting FreeStyle Libre® on prescription should be advised to discuss it with their diabetes specialist, at their next routine secondary care appointment. This includes patients who are currently self-funding FreeStyle Libre®. Community pharmacists should give patients the same advice.

FreeStyle Libre® sensors - prescribing quantities

Upon recommendation from secondary care colleagues, GP practices should prescribe **a maximum of 2 sensors per month** to suitable patients. Patients should be advised, by both GP practices and community pharmacists, that where problems occur with the application of sensors they should contact the manufacturer for advice and/or replacements. The telephone number for Abbott UK General Customer Service telephone number is **0800 1701177**. It is open from 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday; excluding bank holidays.

Additional sensors should not be prescribed on HS21 prescription.

FreeStyle Libre® readers

The Freestyle Libre® reader will be provided free of charge to eligible patients (in the same way glucometers are currently provided free to eligible patients).

It is, therefore, not necessary to prescribe readers.

GP practices and community pharmacists may be provided with FreeStyle Libre® readers free of charge from the manufacturer. It will only be necessary for GP practices and community pharmacists to supply these to patients if the reader they previously obtained from their Trust diabetes team is faulty or has broken. They should **not** be supplied to new patients, as all patients are required to have an

assessment by secondary care colleagues, prior to commencing the FreeStyle Libre[®] system.

Blood glucose and ketone testing

Whilst use of FreeStyle Libre[®] should reduce the need for blood glucose testing, it will not remove it entirely. A finger-prick test using a glucometer is still required during times of rapidly changing glucose levels (i.e. acute illness), if hypoglycaemia or impending hypoglycaemia is reported, or the symptoms do not match the system readings and also prior to, and during driving, to meet current DVLA requirements. The FreeStyle Libre[®] reader has a built in port to enable blood glucose and ketone testing. This requires use of FreeStyle Optium[®] blood glucose test strips and FreeStyle Optium β Ketone[®] strips, which are NOT cost effective choices of blood glucose and ketone strips. Patients should therefore be given separate meters which, where possible, use cost effective blood glucose strips (<£10 for 50) and cost effective ketone test strips (<£10 for 10) to use alongside FreeStyle Libre[®].

Trust staff will advise as to an appropriate choice and quantity of test strips.

In summary, GPs should NOT initiate prescribing of Freestyle Libre[®] to ANY patient (including patients who currently self fund). Patients who inquire about Freestyle Libre[®] should be advised to discuss it with their diabetes specialist, at their next routine secondary care appointment. Prescribing of Freestyle Libre[®] sensors should only be at the request of the patient's secondary care diabetes specialist following assessment and training.

Your co-operation with this guidance is greatly appreciated in order to ensure that the use of FreeStyle Libre[®] is appropriately managed and best use is made of limited resources.

If you have any queries in relation to this guidance, please contact your HSCB Pharmacy Adviser directly for advice.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Joe Brogan
Assistant Director Integrated Care
Head of Pharmacy and Medicines Management

Cc Diabetes Regional Network
CPNI

¹<https://www.nice.org.uk/advice/mib110>

Appendix 1

Freestyle Libre® Reader and Sensors



A sensor is applied to upper arm and is changed every 14 days. The patient uses the reader to scan the sensor to check interstitial glucose levels.



The reader can also be used as a glucometer to enable blood glucose and ketone testing but it requires the use of Freestyle Optium® glucose test strips and Freestyle Optium β® ketone strips which are NOT cost effective choices of glucose and ketone test strips. Patients should therefore be given separate meters, which, where possible use cost effective blood glucose strips (<£10 for 50) and cost effective ketone test strips (<£10 for 10) to use alongside their FreeStyle Libre® device.

Price of Freestyle Optium blood glucose and blood ketone test strips (prices correct as per October 2017 Drug Tariff)

FreeStyle Optium® test strips, pack of 50: £16.00

FreeStyle Optium β® ketone strips, pack of 10: £21.53

Manufacturer: Abbott UK

Customer Service Telephone number: 0800 1701177

(Mon – Fri 8am -8pm excluding bank holidays)