

FreeStyle Libre® – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for patients



What is FreeStyle Libre®?

FreeStyle Libre® ‘flash glucose monitoring system’ measures glucose levels in people with diabetes using a sensor applied to the skin. FreeStyle Libre® is an alternative to finger-prick blood glucose testing, and can produce a near-continuous record of measurements which can be accessed on demand. Readings are taken by scanning the sensor with a FreeStyle Libre® reader or some smartphones.

People using FreeStyle Libre® still need to use finger-prick blood glucose testing:

- during times of rapidly changing glucose levels when interstitial fluid glucose levels may not accurately reflect blood glucose levels, e.g. during exercise
- when the FreeStyle Libre® reader shows low glucose readings (hypoglycaemia) or warns that hypoglycaemia is likely
- when symptoms do not match scanned readings
- to use built-in bolus (mealtime) insulin calculators.

Who is eligible to receive a trial of FreeStyle Libre® on the NHS?

It is recommended that FreeStyle Libre® should only be used for people with Type 1 diabetes, aged four and above, who have been assessed by the specialist diabetes clinician (e.g. consultant or specialist diabetes nurse) and deemed to meet one or more of the following:

1. People with Type 1 diabetes OR with any form of diabetes on haemodialysis and on insulin treatment who, in either of the above, are clinically indicated as requiring intensive monitoring >8 times daily, as demonstrated on a meter download/review over the past 3 months OR with diabetes associated with cystic fibrosis on insulin treatment
2. Pregnant women with Type 1 Diabetes - 12 months in total inclusive of post-delivery period.
3. People with Type 1 diabetes unable to routinely self-monitor blood glucose due to disability who require carers to support glucose monitoring and insulin management.
4. People with Type 1 diabetes for whom the specialist diabetes MDT determines have occupational (e.g. working in insufficiently hygienic conditions to safely facilitate finger-prick testing) or psychosocial circumstances that warrant a 6-month trial of Libre with appropriate adjunct support.

5. Previous self-funders of Flash Glucose Monitors with Type 1 diabetes where those with clinical responsibility for their diabetes care are satisfied that their clinical history suggests that they would have satisfied one or more of these criteria prior to them commencing use of Flash Glucose Monitoring had these criteria been in place prior to April 2019 AND has shown improvement in HbA1c since self-funding.

6. For those with Type 1 diabetes and recurrent severe hypoglycaemia or impaired awareness of hypoglycaemia, where Flash Glucose Monitoring, rather than Continuous Glucose Monitoring with an alarm, is the preferred option after agreement between the clinician and patient.

In addition, all patients (or carers) must be willing to sign up with the Patient/Carer Agreement and undertake training in the use of FreeStyle Libre® and commit to ongoing regular follow-up and monitoring (including remote follow-up where this is offered).

[Who decides if I am able eligible for a trial of FreeStyle Libre® ?](#)

You should ask your local NHS diabetes specialist team **at your next routine appointment** whether you are eligible for a trial of FreeStyle Libre®. Please do not contact your local diabetes specialist team for an early appointment specifically to discuss FreeStyle Libre®. If you are not currently under the care of a local NHS diabetes specialist team, you can ask your GP to refer you for an appointment.

[Who will be able to prescribe FreeStyle Libre®?](#)

If it is clinically appropriate for you to be initiated on FreeStyle Libre® you will be provided with a FreeStyle Libre® Starter Pack (reader and 1 sensor) by the specialist service. The specialist service will write to your GP confirming eligibility for NHS prescriptions. Your GP will provide on-going monthly prescriptions for the sensors.

Long term ('repeat') prescriptions of FreeStyle Libre® sensors from your GP will be offered to people who experience benefits from the trial period, this assessment will be made by your local diabetes specialist team in line with national continuation criteria.

[Can my GP initiate the NHS prescription of FreeStyle Libre®?](#)

GPs have been advised to ask you to discuss NHS prescription of FreeStyle Libre® with your consultant at your next routine specialist appointment. This includes patients who are currently self-funding FreeStyle Libre® or if you have been on a free course of FreeStyle Libre® from Abbott Healthcare through a local hospital.

[What should I do if my FreeStyle Libre® sensor prescribed to me on the NHS is faulty?](#)

If a sensor fails before the end of its 14 day life, you should call the Abbott customer care line on 0800 170 1177 on the day that any problem is identified. You should inform the care line that you are receiving sensor prescriptions and follow the instructions of the Abbott customer care line representative. If the sensor is faulty it will be replaced. Please note that a maximum of 3 replacement FreeStyle Libre® sensors can be issued per individual for those that fall off. You should not request replacement sensors from your GP.

[What if the trial of FreeStyle Libre® is unsuccessful?](#)

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When you start your trial of FreeStyle Libre[®], the goals of treatment will be discussed with you; these goals will be personalised to your specific needs. If these goals are not met within 6 months, then FreeStyle Libre[®] is not the most suitable device for you and your diabetes specialist team will discuss alternatives with you.

What if I am currently paying for the FreeStyle Libre[®] sensors myself?

If you fulfil one of the criteria listed above and have shown sustained improvements, when using FreeStyle Libre[®] over a period of six months or more, your local diabetes specialist team will assess your eligibility for NHS prescribing at **your next routine appointment**.

What if I am new to the area and received FreeStyle Libre[®] sensors from my previous diabetes specialist/ GP?

Your GP will refer you to the local diabetes specialist team, who will assess your eligibility for NHS prescribing at **your next routine appointment**. Your GP may prescribe Free Style Libre until your first appointment. The specialist team will then write to your GP confirming your eligibility for continued prescriptions.

What if I am not eligible to receive a trial of FreeStyle Libre[®] on the NHS?

If you are not eligible for FreeStyle Libre[®] on the NHS but would still like to use FreeStyle Libre[®], you may buy the device from your local pharmacy or the FreeStyle Libre[®] website: <https://www.freestylelibre.co.uk/libre/products.html>.

Do I still need prescriptions for blood glucose test strips?

FreeStyle Libre[®] is not a complete substitute for blood glucose testing. Finger-prick measurements are required in certain circumstances, including:

- during times of rapidly changing glucose levels when interstitial fluid glucose levels may not accurately reflect blood glucose levels,
- when scanned glucose results do not correspond with the user's symptoms,
- to use the bolus calculator function,
- where the FreeStyle Libre[®] reader indicates a low glucose reading.

Initially, whilst you become familiar with the Freestyle Libre system and for the circumstances given above, you will need blood glucose test strips prescribed. However the expectation will be that your use of test strips will decrease, therefore quantities on prescription should be reduced.

Please note that the DVLA now allows insulin-dependent drivers to take glucose levels using flash glucose monitoring, so there is no need to provide test strips for the purposes of driving.