

FreeStyle Libre® – Frequently asked questions for patients



1. What is FreeStyle Libre®?

FreeStyle Libre® is a 'flash glucose monitoring system' that 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
- some driving restrictions (see Q.2)

2. Can I drive if I use FreeStyle Libre®?

In February 2019, the DVLA [updated their guidance](#) for **car and motorcycle drivers** who use flash and continuous glucose monitoring devices to take glucose readings:

1. You can now choose to use flash (FreeStyle Libre®) glucose monitoring devices to take glucose readings before you drive, or during breaks in driving.
2. If using flash glucose monitoring, you must still confirm your blood glucose level with a finger prick test if:
 - your glucose level is 4.0 mmol/L or below; or
 - you experience symptoms of hypoglycaemia; or
 - the glucose monitoring system gives a reading that is not consistent with the symptoms you are experiencing (for example, you feel the symptoms of hypoglycaemia but the reading does not indicate this)

The requirements for glucose testing for bus and lorry drivers remain the same (finger prick blood reading).

Drivers can still use finger prick blood test readings to test their blood glucose levels, should they choose to. The updated guidelines include information for drivers who still prefer to test in this way. The guidelines also include guidance for drivers who treat their diabetes by tablets, diet or both. Drivers who treat their diabetes with insulin must tell the DVLA. Drivers who treat their diabetes by diet only do not need to tell DVLA.

3. Can I swim if I use FreeStyle Libre®?

Sensors are water resistant up to 1m depth and should not be immersed for longer than 30 minutes. Protective equipment can be bought to allow longer periods in water – you should discuss your needs with your specialist team.

4. 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 aged four and above, attending specialist diabetes care, 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**, NICE suggests that Continuous Glucose Monitoring with an alarm is the standard. Other evidence-based alternatives with NICE guidance or NICE TA support are pump therapy, psychological support, structured education, islet transplantation and whole pancreas transplantation. However, if the person with diabetes and their clinician consider that a Flash Glucose Monitoring system would be more appropriate for the individual's specific situation, then this can be considered

OR

7. Patient does not meet NHSE criteria above but started in line with **previous local CCG agreement AND has shown observable improvement in glucose management and/or psychosocial wellbeing**

In addition, all patients (or carers) must be willing to 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), sign a patient agreement and agree for their data to be submitted to the national audit, "Audit of the FreeStyle Libre® by the Association of British Clinical Diabetologists (ABCD)".

5. 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.

6. 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 2 sensors) 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, initially for a 6 month trial.

After 6 month trial, long term ('repeat') prescriptions of FreeStyle Libre® sensors 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.

7. Can my GP initiate the NHS prescription of FreeStyle Libre®?

No. 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.

8. I have been paying for FreeStyle Libre® sensors myself and am under the care of an out of area hospital, will my GP prescribe?

GPs have been advised to share the local FreeStyle Libre® transfer documentation with the out of area hospital and on receipt of the confirmation of eligibility your GP may prescribe.

9. 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 as soon as possible line on 0800 170 1177 (opening times Monday – Friday 8am-8pm, excluding Bank Holidays). Abbott can also be contacted online through the FreeStyle Libre® webpage. 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. **DO NOT dispose of the faulty sensor – Abbott will request that it is returned to them.**

10. What if the trial of FreeStyle Libre® is unsuccessful?

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 other alternatives with you.

11. What if I am currently paying for the FreeStyle Libre® sensors myself?

If you meet one of the criteria listed in Q.3 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**.

12. 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.

13. 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 and sensors from your local pharmacy.

14. Do I still need prescriptions for blood glucose test strips?

FreeStyle Libre® users will still need to do finger-prick blood tests in some circumstances; however it will be expected that the frequency of testing will be reduced. The best value blood glucose test strips will be used, from the locally agreed list.

15. If I am prescribed FreeStyle Libre®, can I also get the FreeStyle test strips for testing glucose or ketone?

FreeStyle Optium (for blood glucose) and Optium β (for blood ketone) test strips will not be prescribed unless available on locally agreed formulary. There are a number of more cost-effective brands available.

16. How do I dispose of sensors?

Used sensors should be put in a sharps bin.

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