

## ! Spotting a forged or fraudulent prescription

### WHAT IS A FORGED OR FRAUDULENT PRESCRIPTION?

A forged or fraudulent prescription can be a:

- i) fake prescription form
- ii) genuine prescription form which has:
  - been stolen
  - been altered by someone other than an authorised prescriber (for example to increase the quantity or dose, or add additional items)
  - not been signed by an authorised prescriber



### 🔍 WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR ...

#### PRESCRIPTION TYPE

Most prescriptions are sent electronically and so treat paper FP10 prescriptions with caution and follow up with the prescriber if you have any concerns.

#### PRESCRIPTION FORM COLOUR

The colours of legitimate forms are deliberately hard to copy, so a fake one tends to stand out.

#### CORRECT PRESCRIPTION FORM

For instance, handwritten prescriptions should not be on form FP10SS (designed for printing).

#### SERIAL NUMBERS

Every prescription form has a serial number. Regularly check your Pharmacy NHS mail account for any alerts issued as they may highlight particular serial numbers to look out for.

#### DATE PRESCRIPTION ISSUED

Remember the time intervals within which prescriptions must be presented for dispensing. If the prescription is old but still valid, query this with the patient to establish if their rationale is plausible.

#### ADDRESS OF PRESCRIBER

You know the surgeries from which you normally get prescriptions. Some areas may see more out of town prescribers e.g. holiday areas. However, bear in mind that the prescription may have been stolen.

#### ALTERATIONS OR ADDITIONS

Alterations that have been seen include: overwriting both printed and handwritten items on prescriptions, overwriting the prescriber's signature, use of amateur type-setting kits to print onto stolen prescriptions. Does the handwriting match hand-written scripts from that prescriber that you've seen previously? Is the spacing sensible?

#### SIGNATURE

Is it unusual or suspiciously legible? You tend to know the signatures of the prescribers local to the pharmacy. If the signature or amendment initials are not known and you are concerned, clarify the issue with the prescriber or compare with another example in the current month's prescriptions?

#### THINGS THAT JUST DON'T SEEM RIGHT

Spelling mistakes, awkward phrasing (such as 'nightly')  
Are the quantities and directions logical? Are the drug combinations odd e.g. nitrazepam and temazepam  
Handwritten prescriptions tend to be from home visits, unlikely to be for a month's supply  
The general manner of the person presenting the script. Prescriptions presented out of usual GP hours.



## What to do if you are presented with a forged or fraudulent prescription

NOTE: PROVIDED FOR THE USE OF PHARMACIES IN THE EAST OF ENGLAND

If threatened, or if you believe that the person may become violent, then telephone the police as soon as you can on 999.

DO NOT DISPENSE	You should not dispense the medication but keep the prescription. However, your personal safety is paramount so do not take any risks in retaining a prescription. If you decide you must give the prescription back take a copy so you can follow up on your concerns, add ' <b>presented at xxx pharmacy on xx/xx/xx</b> ' at the top of the prescription to warn other pharmacies.
STALL FOR TIME	Inform the patient that you can't dispense the prescription immediately, ask them to either wait or return later (if possible, ask them to say when they will return). Delaying tactics to try include: lack of stock, lunchtime closure, backlog of work or the need to speak to the prescriber.
CHECK WITH THE PRESCRIBER	Telephone the prescriber to confirm whether the prescription has been altered or forged. Use a published telephone number rather than any number given on the suspect prescription unless you are sure it is correct.
CALL THE POLICE	If the person who presented the prescription is waiting in the pharmacy, or is expected to return shortly, call the police on 999, explain the situation and ask them to attend immediately. If it is not known when the person may return, or they are to return another day, telephone the police on 101 and report the crime. In either case, obtain a crime reference number from the police.
GET BACK-UP	If your pharmacy is part of a larger store which has security staff, arrange for a member of security staff to come to the pharmacy (straight away, if the person is waiting, or in advance of the time that the person is expected to return).
WARN PHARMACIES	Telephone (or securely email) other local pharmacies. Use the local communication cascade system if you have one.
IF THE PATIENT COMES BACK LATER	If the patient returns later, ask them to wait (using the delaying tactics above) and contact the police on 999. If this is not possible, say you are unable to dispense the prescription because you believe it may not be genuine / may have been altered, and the police have been informed. This will hopefully deter them from attempting to use any other stolen prescriptions they may have.
TELL NHS ENGLAND	Email the Controlled Drugs (CD) team – East CDAO team: <a href="mailto:england.ea-cdao@nhs.net">england.ea-cdao@nhs.net</a> (even if it is not a CD) provide details of the prescription, the prescriber and the prescription number. If CDs are involved report the incident at <a href="https://www.cdreporting.co.uk/">https://www.cdreporting.co.uk/</a>
TELL YOUR LCFS	If you have already notified the police, advise your ICB Local Counter Fraud Specialist (LCFS) of the crime reference number and of the name, number and station of the police officer dealing with the case.
KEEP A RECORD	Record all the details, including a description of the person, and make a note of any telephone conversations. If there would have been any CCTV footage of the person presenting the prescription or when they returned to the pharmacy later, retain and quarantine this footage so that it can be provided to the Police or your LCFS at a later stage. Avoid handling the prescription, put it in a bag to prevent any damage / contamination of potential DNA evidence. If the police or your LCFS wish to take the original prescription away as evidence, retain a copy in the pharmacy.
CLAIM THE REWARD	A reward is payable where fraudulent activity can be proven and the conditions for the scheme are met. Refer to Drug Tariff part XIVA. To claim this payment, call the NHS Business Services Authority on 0800 068 6161.



## Quick reference: where to go if...

YOU ARE PRESENTED WITH OR DISPENSE  
A FRAUDULENT PRESCRIPTION

This is fraud which is a criminal offence. Report it to the police on 101. Retain the prescription (handle it as little as possible) and put it in a bag to retain DNA evidence.

A MEMBER OF STAFF STEALS DRUGS OR  
PRESCRIPTIONS

This is a criminal offence. Report it to the police on 101.

YOU SUSPECT A MEMBER OF STAFF OF  
THEFT

Follow your internal HR policies and contact the police on 101. Collect any evidence.

YOU WITNESS FRAUDULENT OR  
SUSPECT FRAUDULENT ACTIVITIES

Report it to the police on 101 and to the NHS Counter Fraud Authority <https://cfa.nhs.uk/>

UNACCOUNTED LOSS OF STOCK DRUGS

Report to the police on 101.

CONTROLLED DRUGS ARE INVOLVED

Report it on the website [www.cdreporting.co.uk](http://www.cdreporting.co.uk)

**NOTE: THIS GUIDANCE IS PROVIDED FOR THE USE OF PHARMACIES IN THE EAST OF ENGLAND.**  
**PLEASE DO NOT SHARE THIS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN**