Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What is FreeStyle Libre®?

The flash glucose monitoring system is a device to help you self-monitor your glucose levels. Currently, the only device available is Freestyle Libre®. Unlike traditional finger-prick devices (that measure glucose levels in the blood), FreeStyle Libre® measures the glucose in your interstitial fluid. This is via a sensor the size of a two pound coin, applied to the upper arm. It can provide a near-continuous record of your glucose levels, which is produced by scanning the sensor with a reader device.

2. How do I get FreeStyle Libre® on the NHS?

In March 2019, NHS England issued guidance relating to national arrangements for funding of Flash Glucose Monitoring for relevant diabetes patients. As a result the West Yorkshire and Harrogate Health and Care Partnership (WY & Harrogate HCP) have produced a commissioning policy (Link).

If you are already under the care of the specialist diabetes team they will discuss your eligibility at your next routine review, and if you meet the criteria will receive FreeStyle Libre® funded by the NHS. If you are not under the care of the diabetes specialist team but you clearly meet the strict criteria you will need to ask to be referred to the specialist team for assessment.

3. Who is entitled to FreeStyle Libre® on the NHS?

Patients who meet the criteria listed within the WY & Harrogate HCP Commissioning Policy (Link) who are under the care of the diabetes specialist maybe entitled to FreeStyle Libre® on the NHS. If you do not meet the criteria you will not be considered for FreeStyle Libre®, but the healthcare teams will of course continue to support you in all aspects of your diabetes care.

4. Can my GP prescribe FreeStyle Libre® before I have been seen by the specialist?

No - GPs are only allowed to prescribe these sensors once you have been assessed by the diabetes specialist as meeting the strict criteria for NHS funding. Your GP will receive a letter advising them to prescribe if you meet the criteria. Part of the reason for this is that patients obtain most benefit from using FreeStyle Libre® with the focussed educational support of specialist teams. The device itself is only as good as the educational support in how to interpret and act on the results it generates.

5. Once I have been seen by the specialist, how soon will I get the FreeStyle Libre® system?

Once a patient has been assessed by the Diabetes Specialist team and eligibility for Freestyle Libre has been established, the patient will be supplied with the scanner and an initial supply of one sensor (each sensor will last 2 weeks). The Diabetes specialist team will also offer the patient’ training on the use of the FreeStyle Libre® system and will direct them to the ‘You Tube’ support available. Further prescriptions for sensors will then be supplied by the GP who will initially give you one month’s supply (2 sensors). Further prescriptions will then be issued following a successful one month assessment by the specialist diabetes team.
6. How many sensors will my GP prescribe for me?

Following a successful one month assessment, a maximum of 6 months of sensors will initially be funded for each patient. One sensor together with the scanner will be provided by the specialist clinic. Up to a maximum of 6 further monthly (28 day) prescriptions for 2 sensors (12 in total) will be issued by your GP. Continuation after 6 months will be at the discretion of your specialist, and GPs will need to have confirmation from the specialist before they can continue to prescribe. You will be regularly reassessed to ensure you are deriving benefit from continued use of FreeStyle Libre® and are compliant with using it correctly, and your prescription may be stopped in the future following assessment by your specialist.

7. What happens if my sensor falls off and/or I run out of sensors?

You should return to monitoring your glucose levels using blood glucose testing strips, increasing the frequency of testing as necessary and as advised by your specialist to compensate for lack of sensor. You may have to request additional blood glucose testing strips from your GP if you have insufficient to last until your next routine prescription for your sensors/strips is due. Alternatively you may be able to purchase a sensor from your community pharmacy.

If any of the sensors are defective, you will need to contact the manufacturer to obtain a replacement. Your GP cannot issue prescriptions to replace defective sensors. You should contact the Abbott Customer Careline, on 0800 170 1177, on the day that the FreeStyle Libre® sensor falls off, or if closed when the office is next open. You will need to keep the displaced FreeStyle Libre® sensor and follow the instructions of the Abbott Customer Careline representative. Please note that a maximum of 3 replacement FreeStyle Libre® sensors can be issued per individual.

8. Will GPs continue to prescribe glucose testing strips for me if I meet the criteria for use of sensors?

Yes- however it is expected that the use of these strips will be reduced to a lower level (maximum 3 pots per month). You may be asked to change to a more cost effective meter and strip if not already using one.

9. Is there anything else I need to do?

You will be expected to use the system regularly to improve your diabetes Management, upload data for central monitoring, and participate in audits to assess outcomes.

10. Can drivers use the Flash Glucose Sensors to monitor blood glucose levels prior to driving?

The DVLA has updated the guidance on glucose testing prior to driving which now permits the use of interstitial glucose readings e.g. using Flash Glucose Scanning (FreeStyle Libre®) and continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) systems for group 1 drivers only as finger prick tests are still required (even for group 1 drivers) under certain circumstances, such as any hypoglycaemic events, suspected hypoglycaemic
events or mismatches between the Libre results and the blood glucose results. Further information can be found here.

11. What if I am already self-funding FreeStyle Libre®?

If you have been buying the FreeStyle Libre® directly from the manufacturer (and wish to continue using the device) you should still purchase your sensors via this route until you are reviewed, if appropriate, by the Specialist Diabetes Team at your next routine clinic appointment. NHS Leeds CCG will only fund FreeStyle Libre® for patients who fulfill the eligibility criteria as written in the WY & Harrogate HCP Commissioning Policy (Link). It is important that you understand that your review will not be based on what has already been purchased, but on what has been agreed for national NHS funding.

12 What if I want to use (or continue using) FreeStyle Libre® but do not meet the criteria for funding?

You can buy FreeStyle Libre® directly from the manufacturer - https://www.FreeStylelibre.co.uk/libre/ or Tel: 0800 170 1177.

13. If patients have any additional questions, who should they be directed to?

Any questions that cannot be answered by the Diabetes Specialist Team should be directed to Leedsccg.comms@nhs.net