

## Information for our Patients Travelling Abroad – FAQs and provision of medical care

**By law, the NHS ceases to have responsibility for the medical care of patients when they leave the UK.**

### **European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)**

- People traveling within Europe (including Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) are advised to always carry an authorised European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) and this gives entitlement to reduced cost (and sometimes free) medical treatment.
- The same applies to EU citizens who are in the UK.
- The cards cover pre-existing medical conditions and routine maternity care, as well as emergency care.
- As part of **Brexit** the UK and the EU agreed that the EHIC cards can still be **used until their expiry dates**.
- It is anticipated that the government will issue a new Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) which will replace the EHIC for the majority of UK citizens.

### **Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC)**

- The GHIC is free of charge
  - The GHIC will not be valid in Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein or Switzerland.
  - The government website says that the GHIC is not an alternative to travel insurance and everyone is advised to purchase travel insurance which includes health cover
- GHIC and the EHIC do not cover any private medical healthcare such as mountain rescue in ski resorts or being flown back to the UK
- Every family member requires a GHIC. You can make an application for yourself and on behalf of your partner and any dependent children under the age of 16.
  - Under the age of 16, a parent or guardian will need to apply.
  - Boarding school teaching staff can apply on behalf of any children in their care
- If someone is planning to study in an EU country, they need to apply for a GHIC that's time limited to the length of their course. You cannot apply for this online. They also need a letter from their university or college

### What the GHIC covers

*"You can use a GHIC to get "necessary healthcare" from state services when visiting an EU country.*

Necessary healthcare means healthcare which becomes medically necessary during your stay, and you cannot reasonably wait until you're back in the UK to get it.

This includes things like:

- emergency treatment and visits to A&E
- treatment for a long-term or pre-existing medical condition
- routine medical care for pre-existing conditions that need monitoring
- routine maternity care, as long as you're not going abroad to give birth
- oxygen and kidney dialysis
- You'll need to pre-arrange some treatments with the relevant healthcare provider in the country you are visiting, for example kidney dialysis or chemotherapy.
- Check that you're not booked with a private healthcare provider, as these are not covered by GHIC.
- If you fall ill on a ship or plane, your GHIC also covers you for necessary treatment when you arrive in an EU country.
- Not all state healthcare is free in the EU and you may have to pay for services that you'd get for free on the NHS.
- Each country's health system is different and might not include all the things you might expect to get free of charge from the NHS.
- In some countries, you have to pay a percentage towards the cost of any state-provided treatment, known as a patient co-payment.
- You'll have to pay the same as a patient from that country.
- Find out more in the GOV.UK country healthcare guides. [Healthcare in the EU, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)"

### Healthcare in non-EU countries

The UK has reciprocal health deals with for example Australia and New Zealand, under which visitors can receive urgent treatment at a reduced cost or for free but do not cover pre-existing conditions. Everyone is advised to check their travel policies depending on their travel destination.

#### Travel advice during Covid

- The GOV.uk web [site](#) provides up to date travel advice including,
- Foreign travel advice for each [country](#), people can sign up for email alerts
  - Travel health advice for travellers [NaTHNaC](#) -
  - Current [Red](#) list travel ban countries

## **Covid passport**

There have been no official announcements yet as to whether travellers will need to provide evidence that they have had both doses of the Covid vaccine. It has been suggested that the NHS app could be used as a Covid passport for travel.

The government will continue their 'traffic light' system for travel to categorise different destinations. The advice will include which countries UK residents can travel to without needing to quarantine though it is likely that they will still be required to undergo a Covid test prior to departure and on return to the UK.

**We need to avoid the expectation that people can secure evidence of vaccination or testing by obtaining a letter from their GP practice.**

## **Prescriptions for patients travelling out of the country**

Patients should be advised to check specific entitlements prior to travel.

- For patients who will be out of the country for less than 3 months, it is reasonable to provide sufficient medicines for an existing condition (i.e., asthma, diabetes)
- For patients leaving the country for more than 3 months, they should be advised to register with a local doctor for their continuing medical needs.
- GPs are not required by their Terms of Service to provide prescriptions for the treatment of a condition that is not present and may arise while the patient is abroad.
- Persons who have left the UK, or who are intending to leave the UK, for more than 3 months are not normally allowed to continue to be registered with a practice.
- The NHS accepts responsibility for supplying ongoing medication for temporary periods abroad of up to 3 months.
- If a person is going to be abroad for more than three months then all that the patient is entitled to at NHS expense is a sufficient supply of his/her regular medication in order to get to their destination, where they should then find an alternative supply of that medication.

## **Advice for patients whilst abroad**

Patients travelling abroad may contact their practice for a variety of reasons. This may include:

- Urgent request for medical records/history due to emergency
- Illness while abroad

- Admin reasons (e.g., request for appointment or repeat prescription for when they return)

Any requests for information from the medical records should be handled in accordance with [GDPR](#).

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