Health care for people coming to Scotland to study

NHS inform
Health information you can trust

In Scotland, most health care is provided by the National Health Service (NHS).

If you are coming to Scotland to study, and you live in Scotland legally, this factsheet tells you how you can get health care from the NHS while you are here.

I am an overseas student. Can I get health care from the NHS in Scotland?

- If you are coming to Scotland to study on a full-time course, you can get health care from the NHS from the day you arrive until one month after your course finishes.
- You may also get health care from the NHS if you are a part-time student and you are also working in Scotland.

What do I need to do?

- You need to find a family doctor as soon as possible after you arrive in Scotland, and ask them to register you as an NHS patient. You won't have to pay for this.

In Scotland, family doctors are often called General Practitioners or GPs. They work in GP surgeries, medical practices or health centres.

The GP will decide if you can register as an NHS patient and if you can get NHS treatment free.

The GP will help you look after all your health needs. They will decide if you need to see another health professional – for example, a hospital doctor or someone in mental health or maternity services. If you do, the GP will make the appointment for you.

- Your university or college may be able to help you find a GP. You can also phone the NHS inform Helpline on 0800 22 44 88 or look on the internet (www.nhs24.com). The helpline can provide an interpreting service.
- When you have found a GP surgery, contact them and make an appointment to register as an NHS patient.
- If you need an interpreter, ask the GP surgery to arrange this for you. When you make an appointment, tell them what language you prefer to use.

What happens when I register as an NHS patient?

- When you go to the GP surgery, the staff will ask you for some personal information – for example, your name, address and date of birth.
- They will ask to see some documents to help them decide if you can register as an NHS patient. If you need hospital care, staff at the hospital will also ask to see these documents.
    - If you are from the European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland, NHS staff may ask to see your European Health Insurance Card (EHIC).

      They will also ask to see a letter from your university or college which confirms that you have a place on a full-time course. The letter should say when your course starts and how long it lasts for.

- If you are not from the EEA or Switzerland, they will ask for documents that prove you have a place on a full-time course at a university or college. For example:
  - your student visa, and
  - a letter from your university or college. The letter should confirm that you have a place on a full-time course, and say when your course starts and how long it lasts for.

The United Kingdom has special health care arrangements with some countries outside the EEA. If you are from one of those countries, you can get some health care from the NHS in Scotland. UKCISA can give you more information about this.

- If you don't have the documents they ask for, staff at the GP surgery may not be able to register you as an NHS patient.
- If you receive health care from the NHS before you are registered as an NHS patient, you may be asked to pay for this. This may happen, for example, if you are waiting to get the documents you need for registering as an NHS patient. After you are registered, any money you have paid will be returned to you.

Countries in the European Economic Area (EEA): Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.

When I am registered as an NHS patient, is all health care free?

- No. When you are registered as an NHS patient, a lot of your health care will be free. But you will still need to pay for some things – for example, some dental treatment.
- The leaflet 'A quick guide to help with health costs' tells you if you can get free treatment or help with health costs. It is available from citizens advice bureaux and Jobcentre Plus offices. You can also find it on the internet (www.scotland.gov.uk).

Can my family get health care from the NHS?

- If you are registered as an NHS patient, your husband, wife or civil partner, and any of your children who live in Scotland with you, can also get health care from the NHS. The children must be aged under 16, or under 19 and in full-time education.

Staff at the GP surgery will ask you to fill in a form for your husband, wife or civil partner, and any children. You may need to show your marriage or civil partnership certificate, and birth certificates for your children.

- What about other members of my family?
  - If you are from the EEA or Switzerland, other members of your family who are not from the EEA can get health care from the NHS if they have been allowed to join you in Scotland. They will need to show a document proving that the UK Government has allowed them to do this – for example, an EEA family permit. UKCISA can tell you more about this permit.
  - Other members of your family who are not from the EEA or Switzerland may have their own right to health care from the NHS in Scotland – for example, if they have been allowed to come here to work or to study.
  - Other members of your family who are from the EEA or Switzerland can get health care from the NHS. They must have an EHIC and they should register with a GP.

What happens if I am not registered as an NHS patient?

- If you are not registered as an NHS patient, you can still get some health care from the NHS.

Services that are free for everyone include:

  - emergency care in a hospital (in the accident and emergency department, casualty department or minor injury unit)
  - emergency care at a GP surgery
  - emergency transport in an ambulance
  - sexual health services
  - treatment for some infectious diseases and sexually transmitted infections.

- If you need any other health care, and you are not registered as an NHS patient, you will need to pay for it. Staff at the GP surgery or hospital will be able to give you more information on this.

You can get medical insurance to help you with the costs of your care. To find out more about medical insurance, phone the Association of British Insurers on 020 7600 3333 or look on the internet (www.abi.org.uk) and follow the links to Health & Protection Insurance in the Consumer Information section.

How can I find out more?

- Contact your university or college for information.
- Visit the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) website at www.ukcisa.org.uk or phone their advice line for students on 020 3131 3576. The advice line is open Monday to Friday from 1 to 4pm.
- For information about health conditions and services, phone the NHS inform Helpline on 0800 22 44 88 (textphone 18001 0800 22 44 88; the helpline also provides an interpreting service). The helpline is open every day between 8am and 10pm.
- Contact your local citizens advice bureau for free, confidential, impartial and independent advice about almost anything, including NHS services and your rights. To find your nearest branch, look in your phone book or on Citizens Advice Scotland's website (www.cas.org.uk).

Other factsheets in this series

- Health care for people coming to Scotland to work

- Health care for asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland
- Health care in Scotland for former UK residents now working abroad
- Health care in Scotland for UK passport holders living abroad
- Health care for UK pensioners visiting Scotland
- Health care in Scotland for holidaymakers from overseas.

You can get these factsheets from:

- anywhere you get NHS care
- www.inform.co.uk
- www.hris.org.uk
- the NHS inform Helpline on 0800 22 44 88.

Feeling unwell?

- Go to a pharmacy and ask for advice. To find your nearest pharmacy, phone the NHS inform Helpline on 0800 22 44 88 or look on the internet (www.nhs24.com).
- Visit the NHS 24 website at www.nhs24.com for health information and advice.
- Contact the GP surgery where you are registered. If you need an interpreter, ask the GP surgery to arrange this for you.
- Phone NHS 24 on 08454 24 24 24 or look on the internet (www.nhs24.com) if the GP surgery where you are registered is closed, or if you are not yet registered as an NHS patient. NHS 24 can provide an interpreting service.

In an emergency (if your condition is very serious), phone 999 and ask for an ambulance.

We have tried our best to make sure the information in this factsheet is correct. However, the factsheet is for guidance only so you should not rely on it as a full statement of the law. If you are thinking about taking legal action, you should contact a solicitor, a citizens advice bureau, the Patient Advice & Support Service or other advice agency.

Email ask@hris.org.uk to ask for this information in another language or format.

Produced by NHS inform

Version 5 - Produced in October 2012 - Revision date October 2014