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## THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM IN THE UK

The National Health Service (NHS) is a publicly funded system which provides healthcare for people living in the United Kingdom. Most NHS services are free at the point of access for British nationals. The NHS offers services such as appointments with a doctor specialising in general medicine (known as a general practitioner or 'GP'), emergency healthcare through Accident and Emergency services (A&E) services, dental services and specialist secondary health services. There is also a smaller private healthcare sector Ithat people can choose to pay for if they wish.

### Will I have to pay to use NHS services?

UK nationals are able to access all NHS services. Some NHS services are free at the point of access (e.g. GP appointments, treatment in A&E), while others you might need to pay for (e.g. some prescriptions and dental treatment).

The following treatment provided by the NHS is free for everyone:

- A&E services (but not follow-up treatment, or admission as an in-patient to hospital)
- Family planning services
- Diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted infections

## Students from the European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland who are enrolled on a course lasting more than 6 months

The UK left the European Union on 1 January 2020. During the transition period, which will last until 31 December 2020, students from the EEA and Switzerland can continue to access NHS services at no additional cost for all treatment that a healthcare professional feels is needed during their stay in the UK.

These arrangements could change once the transition period ends. However, if your course begins before the transition period ends on 31/12/2020, you can apply for the EU Settlement Scheme in order to protect your immigration status and healthcare access. You can find out more about this scheme at www.gov.uk/settled-status-eu-citizens-families.

If you are a student from the EEA or Switzerland, you will need to show a valid European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) in order to access NHS services, otherwise you may be charged for any NHS services that you access (apart from emergency care provided by an A&E department).

If you lose or forget your EHIC, you will need to apply for a Provisional Replacement Certificate (PRC) from your domestic healthcare provider and ask them to fax it to the NHS hospital providing your treatment. It is your responsibility to make these arrangements.

As long as your course lasts for more than 6 months, you can register with a GP.

## Students from the European economic area (EEA) and Switzerland enrolled on a course lasting less than 6 months

If you are a student from the EEA or Switzerland, you will need to show a valid European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) in order to access NHS services, otherwise you may be charged for any NHS services you use (apart from emergency care provided by an A&E department).

If you lose or forget your EHIC, you will need to apply for a Provisional Replacement Certificate (PRC) from your domestic healthcare provider and ask them to fax it to the NHS hospital providing your treatment. It is your responsibility to make these arrangements.

If your course lasts less than 6 months, you cannot register with a GP. However, you can still visit a GP as a temporary patient for advice and treatment if you need it.

### Students from outside the European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland enrolled in courses lasting more than 6 months

If you have been granted a general student visa (a Tier 4 visa) you will have had to pay an Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) as part of your visa application fee. This will entitle you to access healthcare in the UK through the NHS in the same way as a UK national at no additional cost. Details of exemptions from the IHS can be found at www.gov.uk/healthcare-immigration-application/who-needs-pay.

## You should bring your biometric residence permit with you when you access healthcare in the UK.

You may also want to consider obtaining private medical insurance to ensure that you are covered for other medical-related costs that are not met by the NHS, such as the cost of repatriation. However, medical insurance is not compulsory and it is your choice whether you get it or not.

## Students from outside the European Economic area (EEA) and Switzerland enrolled on courses lasting less than 6 months

If your course lasts less than 6 months or less and you have a short-term study visa, you are advised to obtain private medical insurance. Otherwise, you will have to pay for any NHS treatment you may need.

If you have a short-term study visa, you cannot register with a doctor, but you can still visit one as a temporary patient if required. This means you can still visit a GP for advice and treatment during your stay.

### **Reciprocal Healthcare Agreements**

The UK has reciprocal healthcare agreements with some countries. You should contact your country's health authorities to check whether a reciprocal healthcare agreement with the UK is in place, and what this entitles you to. Even if a reciprocal healthcare agreement is in place, this may not cover all treatment and you may still have to purchase medical insurance.

### REGISTERING WITH A GP

GPs (General Practitioners) are doctors who can treat common medical conditions. They are usually based in GP practices (also known as GP surgeries) or health centres. GPs specialise in general medicine but can refer you to hospitals and other healthcare services for more specialist treatment. It is important to register with a GP within the first few weeks of arriving in the UK so that you can get medical advice and treatment easily and quickly when you need it.

### How do I register with a GP?

You can search for GPs in your local area at www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-gp. Some GPs will only accept you as a patient if you live in their practice boundary. You can often find information about the practice boundary on the practice's website.

If you move to a new address, you will need to check whether you can remain registered with your current GP practice. If you move to an address outside the practice boundary of your current GP, you may have to register with a GP practice in your new area.

#### What evidence will I need?

To register with a GP, you will have to complete a registration form. You can obtain this from the GP practice. Once you have completed the form, return it to the practice so that they can register you as a patient. You may be able to obtain a registration form from the practice website or by calling/visiting the GP practice.

\*\*Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, many GPs are only allowing you to visit a practice in person if absolutely necessary and following a COVID-19 screening process.

## Please telephone a practice first before attending in person and only attend if you have been told to do so\*\*

Some GP practices may also ask for proof of identity and/ or address when you register. The practice will tell you what they will accept as proof, but this might include things like:

- an NHS card/number
- a university student card
- a passport
- a utility bill/bank statement with your current address dated within the last 3 months

However, you should not be refused registration or appointments with a GP because you do not have a proof of address or identity to hand, even if you are not a British national. Remember, you can only register with a GP if your course lasts more than 6 months, but you can still see a GP as a temporary patient.

If you are a **student from the EEA or Switzerland,** you should provide details of your European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) on the registration form for your GP. You should also **bring your EHIC** with you when you attend your GP practice.

If you are a **student from outside the EEA or Switzerland,** you should indicate that you have paid the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) on the registration form for your GP (unless you are exempt, in which case you should indicate this on your form). You should also **bring your biometric residence permit** with you when you attend you GP practice, if you have one.

### THE NHS WEBSITE

#### The NHS website

The NHS website is a great place to start if you're feeling unwell or have a minor injury. It gives useful information about symptoms, diagnoses and treatment of different health conditions, including what to do and when to get help. It also gives information about how different medicines. It can be accessed at www.nhs.uk.

#### **Pharmacies**

Pharmacies can often be found on your local high street and can provide treatments and advice for minor illnesses such as coughs and colds, rashes, stomach upsets, bites and stings and hay fever. If a GP prescribes medication for you, you will normally have to collect it from a pharmacy.

Healthcare professionals known as pharmacists work in pharmacies. They can dispense medicine prescribed by a GP or other healthcare professional and offer advice and recommend medicines for a range of minor illnesses and conditions. If your symptoms suggest that you have a more serious illness, pharmacists are trained to make sure you get the right help and will tell you if you need to see a GP or another medical professional. You can find a pharmacy near you at

www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-Pharmacy.

### GP Surgeries (also known as gp practices or healthcare centres)

If you have persistent symptoms, chronic pain and/or a long-term condition, you can get advice and treatment from a doctor known as a "GP" (General Practitioner) at a GP surgery. GPs can help you with both physical and mental health conditions. If you are struggling with your mental health, GPs can refer you to specialist mental health services. You need an appointment to see a GP during their opening hours. Usually, you can get an appointment the same day by calling the GP practice early in the morning, or sometimes you can book an appointment several weeks in advance. Contact your GP surgery or visit their website to find out how to book an appointment.

\*\* Due to COVID-19, do not go into the GP surgery in person unless you have been told to do so by surgery staff. Contact your GP via telephone or their website instead and they will give you advice about what to do. You'll only be asked to visit the surgery if it is absolutely necessary\*\*

# ACCESSING URGENT HEALTHCARE IN NON-LIFE-THREATENING EMERGENCIES

### Calling NHS 111

If you need advice or treatment out-of-hours (i.e. in the evening, during a weekend or bank holiday) for an illness/injury that is not life-threatening, you can call 111 for free from a landline or mobile phone. You will speak to someone who can give you advice, make appointments for you at GP surgeries, pharmacies and urgent treatment centres, or send an ambulance if your condition appears to be serious or life-threatening. The NHS 111 service can help you with both your physical and mental health. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

You can also get help by accessing the NHS 111 online service at **111.nhs.uk/**. You will answer questions about your main symptom, find out where and when to get help and/or be contacted by a nurse if needed.

### **Walk-in Clinics and Urgent Treatment Centres**

Walk-in clinics and urgent treatment centres can treat you if you need urgent medical attention that isn't life-threatening. This can include things like sprains and strains, minor head injuries, minor scalds/burns, eye problems and feverish illness. If you think you might need to go to a walk-in clinic or urgent treatment centre, you can call NHS 111 first and they will advise you where you should go for treatment. You don't need an appointment for a walk-in clinic or urgent treatment centre, and they tend to be open for longer hours than GP surgeries (including bank holidays).

### HOW TO GET HELP DURING A LIFE-THREATENING MEDICAL EMERGENCY

### Calling 999

Call 999 in a **medical emergency.** This means that someone is seriously ill/injured and their life is at risk. Medical emergencies can include a person losing consciousness, experiencing fits that aren't stopping, chest pain, breathing difficulties, severe bleeding that can't be stopped, severe allergic reactions, severe burns/scalds and heart attacks or strokes. Medical emergencies can also include mental health emergencies, such as someone indicating that they intend to harm themselves and/or someone else. You can call 999 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

When you call 999, an operator will ask questions to establish what's wrong, such as:

- Where are you (including the area or postcode)?
- What phone number are you calling from?
- What has happened?

This will allow the operator to determine the most appropriate response. Sometimes a medically-trained clinical adviser will give you advice via telephone about how to help the unwell person. If it's a life-threatening emergency, an ambulance will be sent. If the ambulance team think that you need to be taken to hospital, they will take you to the most appropriate A&E (see below), which may not always be the closest.

### Accident and Emergency (A&E) Departments

As well as calling 999, you can visit A&E in a medical emergency. This means that someone is seriously ill/injured and their life is at risk. Medical emergencies can include a person losing consciousness, experiencing fits that aren't stopping, chest pain, breathing difficulties, severe bleeding that can't be stopped, severe allergic reactions, severe burns/scalds and heart attacks or strokes. Medical emergencies can also include mental health emergencies, such as someone indicating that they intend to harm themselves and/or someone else.

A&E departments are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Medical staff in A&E are highly trained in emergency medicine. Not all hospitals have an A&E department. You can find your nearest A&E service at

www.nhs.uk/service-search/other-services/ Accident-and-emergency-services/ LocationSearch/428

### PHYSICAL HEALTH

You can get advice and treatment for your physical health through the NHS website, pharmacies, GP surgeries and by calling NHS 111, as outlined above. You can also get help for a life-threatening medical emergency by calling 999 or visiting A&E.

### Finding a dentist

Dentists can treat you if you have problems with your teeth or oral disease. In the UK, you can be seen either by a dentist at a dental surgery either as an NHS patient or as a private patient. Most dental surgeries provide both NHS and private treatment.

Dentistry is one of the few NHS services where you have to pay a contribution towards the cost of your care. This means that, even if you see a dentist as an NHS patient, you may still have to pay for your dental treatment. Make sure that you understand whether you are paying for NHS or private treatment, or a mixture of both, before you begin any dental treatment.

Sometimes dental surgeries do not have the capacity to accept new NHS patients. This means that you may have to join a waiting list, look for a different dentist who is accepting new NHS patients or see a dentist privately. You can search for an NHS dentist near you at www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-adentist.

\*\* Due to COVID-19, some changes have been made to routine dental treatment. Contact your dentist by phone or email. ONLY visit if you've been told to do so. If you think that you need urgent dental treatment, call your dentist or call NHS 111\*\*

### Finding an optician

You can visit an optician if you need to have glasses or contact lenses prescribed and fitted. You can also visit an optician for an eye test, where you will be examined for eye abnormalities and conditions. They will refer you to a GP or hospital eye clinic for further investigation and treatment if needed. You will usually have to pay for optician's services. You can find an optician near you at

www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-an-optician.

### MENTAL HEALTH

You can get advice and treatment for your mental health through the NHS website, your GP surgery and by calling NHS 111, as outlined above. You can also get help for a life-threatening mental health emergency by calling 999 or visiting A&E.

### Mental health services available through the NHS website

You can search for mental health support in your local area at www.nhs.uk/service-search/other-services/Mental-health-information-and-support/LocationSearch/330.

You can search for mental health support for young people in your local area at www.nhs.uk/service-search/other-services/ Mental-health-information-and-support/LocationSearch/330

#### Self-referral mental health services

Some mental health services allow people to refer themselves such as services for drug and alcohol problems, as well as the NHS psychological therapies service (IAPT):

If you are 25 or under, you can self-refer to Forward Thinking Birmingham, Birmingham's mental health service for children and young people, at

www.forwardthinkingbirmingham.org.uk/make-a-referral.

Forward Thinking Birmingham also offer a drop-in service in Birmingham city centre.

\*\* Due to COVID-19, the drop-in service is currently closed. However, support trained practitioners will be available by emailing askbeam@childrenssociety.org.uk or calling 0207 841 4470. The operating hours are between 10am-6pm 7 days a week (please note local call charges do apply)\*\*

As long as you are registered with a GP, you can refer yourself directly to a psychological therapies service (IAPT) directly at

www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-psychological-therapies-service/.

You do not need to see a GP to do this. These services offer therapies for common problems such as stress, anxiety, depression, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and phobias.

You can find local drug misuse services at www.nhs.uk/service-search/other-services/Mental-health-services-for-drug-misuse/LocationSearch/338.

You can find local alcohol misuse services at www.nhs.uk/service-search/other-services/
Mental-health-services-for-alcohol-addiction/
LocationSearch/294.

### Mental health support through your GP

If you are experiencing mental health difficulties, your GP can support you by referring you to specialist secondary mental health services and/or prescribing medication that may help you manage your symptoms. Your GP will assess your situation and offer appropriate advice and treatment.

### Getting urgent help for your mental health when it's not an emergency

If you need urgent help for your mental health but it's not an emergency, you can call your local NHS urgent mental health helpline 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. You can find your local helpline at www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-anurgent-mental-health-helpline.

If you live in Birmingham or Solihull, you can call the Birmingham and Solihull Urgent Mental Health Helpline on **0121 262 3555**. This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. You don't have to already be known to mental health services to access this service.

Forward Thinking Birmingham also offer a crisis line for young people aged up to 25 years living in Birmingham. Call **0300 300 0099** to speak to someone. You don't have to be registered with this service to call.

If you need help urgently for your mental health but it's not an emergency, and you're not able to speak to your local NHS urgent mental health helpline or you're not sure what to do:

- Ask for an urgent GP appointment or
- Call111 or use the NHS 111 online service at 111. nhs.uk/

The Samaritans also offer a free 24/7 helpline – call 116 123 or visit www.samaritans.org/

Shout offer a free 24/7 text service helpline-text **85258** or visit **www.giveusashout.org/** 

## GETTING HELP FOR YOUR MENTAL HEALTH IN AN EMERGENCY

If you are concerned that your life or someone else's life is at risk because:

- you or someone else is seriously injured/has taken an overdose
- you or someone else has intent and means to seriously injure/ take an overdose
- you do not feel that you can keep yourself or someone else safe

You should call 999 or go to A&E immediately. A mental health emergency is just as serious as a physical one.

### Mental health support at Birmingham City University

Birmingham City University's Mental Health and Wellbeing Team offer support to all students around their mental health and wellbeing. The mental health and wellbeing team consists of counsellors, mental health advisers and wellbeing advisers. We offer free, confidential appointments 51 weeks of the year, Monday to Friday 9am-5pm.

In order to arrange an initial appointment, please fill out our registration form. This will help us to allocate you to an appropriate adviser. You can access the registration form here: hub.bcu.ac.uk/sites/ss/HW/Lists/CMWB%20List%202/Item/newifs.aspx?List=ed2fcbec%2D5317%2D4f93%2Db84f%2D41a771473fc5&Web=c45b5557%2Df4af%2D4bae%2Dbbc9%2Dbd2a1b010293

\*\*Due to COVID-19, the Mental Health and Wellbeing Team are currently offering appointments and support via telephone/ Microsoft Teams only\*\*

Birmingham City University students going through a tough time can also access free online support with togetherall at **www.togetherall.com** 

### **SEXUAL HEALTH**

The NHS also offers sexual health services. Sexual health services are free and available to everyone regardless of your sex, age, ethnic origin or sexual orientation. Sexual health services can test for and treat sexually transmitted infections (STIs), as well as offering access to and guidance around contraception. These services are completely confidential. If English is not your first language, you should speak to the staff at the clinic before visiting to make sure you get the right support.

You can find your nearest sexual health service at www.nhs.uk/service-search/other-services/
Sexual%20health%20services/
LocationSearch/1847.

#### Sexual assault services

Sexual assaults can happen to people of all genders and can include any unwanted sexual activity, from touching without consent to rape. If you have been sexually assaulted, you can get help and medical care at a sexual assault referral centre 24 hours a day. These services are free and confidential. The service will not tell the police unless you want them to.

You can find your nearest sexual assault referral centre at www.nhs.uk/service-search/other-services/Rape-and-sexual-assault-referral-centres/LocationSearch/364

### CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that is currently causing a global pandemic. You can find the latest advice and guidance from the NHS about coronavirus at www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/.

### Main symptoms

The main symptoms of coronavirus are:

- a temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

### If you have any of these symptoms you must:

- get a test as soon as possible to check if you have coronavirus
- stay at home and self-isolate until you get your test result
   only leave home to have your test
- anyone you live with, and anyone in your support bubble\* must also stay at home until you get your test result
- \* Under UK government guidance, someone who lives alone, or just with their children, can meet people from 1 other household- this is called a "support bubble"

### How to get a coronavirus test

You can have a free test to check if you have coronavirus if you, or someone you live with, has symptoms:

- at a test site near you today and get your result tomorrow
- with a home test kit (it may take longer to get your result this way)

#### Book a test as soon as you can.

You need to get the test done within the first 5 days of having symptoms. You can get a test by visiting the government website at self-referral.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/antigen/name.

### Self-isolating

Self-isolating means staying at home and not leaving your house for any reason, or having any visitors to your home (except for essential care). This helps stop coronavirus from spreading.

#### You must self-isolate if:

- you have any symptoms of coronavirus (a high temperature, a new continuous cough or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste)
- you have tested positive for coronavirus after having a test
- someone you live with/in your support bubble has symptoms of coronavirus or has tested positive
- you have been told by NHS Test and Trace that you've been in contact with someone with coronavirus (see below)

If you have symptoms or have tested positive for coronavirus, you will usually have to self-isolate for at least 10 days.

### You will need to self-isolate for 14 days if:

- someone you live with/in your support bubble has symptoms or has tested positive for coronavirus
- you have been told by NHS Test and Trace that you've been in contact with someone with coronavirus (see below)

#### The NHS Test and Trace Service

If you test positive for coronavirus, you may be contacted by NHS Test and Trace. The contact worker from NHS Test and Trace will ask you where you've been and who you've been in close contact with recently. This is so that they can contact anyone who may have caught the virus from you.

If you are contacted by NHS Test and Trace because you've been in contact with someone who has coronavirus, you will be told:

- to stay at home (self-isolate) for 14 days from the day you were last in contact with the person (this is because it can take up to 14 days for symptoms to appear)
- if you need food or medicine, order it online or by phone, or ask someone else to drop it off at your home
- do not have visitors in your home except for essential care
- try to avoid contact with anyone else you live with if you don't have any symptoms, people you live with/in your support bubble do not need to self-isolate

### How to treat coronavirus symptoms

If you have a high temperature, you can:

- get lots of rest
- drink plenty of water
- take paracetamol or ibuprofen if you feel uncomfortable

If you have a cough, you can:

- lie on your side or sit upright
- have a teaspoon of honey (do not give honey to babies under 12 months old)
- if this doesn't help, contact your pharmacist via telephone/online for advice about cough treatments (do not visit the pharmacy in person)

### If you feel breathless, you can:

- keep your room cool (e.g. open a window do not use a fan as this can spread the virus)
- breathe slowly in through your nose and out through your mouth
- sit upright in a chair
- relax your shoulders
- lean forward in your chair
- if this gets worse, get medical advice from the NHS 111 online coronavirus service at **111.nhs.uk/covid-19**

### What to do if your symptoms get worse

If you:

- feel that you cannot cope with your symptoms at home
- feel breathless and it's getting worse
- Feel that your symptoms are getting worse and you're not sure what to do

Use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service at **111.nhs.uk/covid-19**. Only call 111 if you cannot get help online.

### Call 999 for an ambulance if you or someone else:

- are struggling to breathe
- are coughing up blood
- have blue lips or a blue face
- feel cold and sweaty, with pale or blotchy skin
- have a rash that does not fade when you roll a glass over it
- collapse or faint
- become confused or very drowsy
- have stopped peeing or are peeing much less than usual

You should also tell the operator you might have coronavirus symptoms.

### What to do if you get coronavirus symptoms again

If you get coronavirus symptoms more than once, you must self-isolate again and get a coronavirus test, even if you have had a positive test result before.

### People at higher risk from coronavirus

Some people are at higher risk of health complications if they catch coronavirus. You can read more about who is at higher risk from coronavirus and advice for people at high risk at www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/.

### Government guidance on coronavirus

You can find the latest guidance from the UK government about coronavirus and topics such as local restrictions, transport and international travel and immigration at www.gov.uk/coronavirus.