

**Q: What care will the NHS not provide?**

**A:** The NHS will not generally fund:

- Treatments for which there is no scientific evidence of benefit
- Cosmetic procedures
- Treatments for mild conditions which will resolve on their own
- Interventions which do more harm than good

**Q: I want to get the same care in the UK as I get in my home country. How can I get this?**

**A:** The NHS runs a universal healthcare system free if you need it, funded by taxation. There is therefore a finite limit to the resources available and what the NHS has decided is reasonable to pay for. There are no top up payment systems generally available to buy additional care. So, if you want the exact same services that you receive in your home country, you may have to pay for some of them here. The NHS will, however, provide you with all immediate and necessary care when you need it.

**Q: Can I see a specialist without seeing my GP?**

**A:** The role of GPs is particularly strong in the UK NHS. It is almost impossible to see a specialist without going through your GP, who will always be your first point of contact for your health needs. They will refer you if they think it necessary.

**Q: In my country I get regular screening tests and investigations. Can I get these in the UK?**

**A:** Although you can usually get the same tests in the UK as in your home country, these are often guided by NICE (National Institute for Clinical Excellence) or by scientific evidence. Therefore, guidelines and the frequency of the test or the specific tests available may vary considerably.

**Q: Does my GP make more money by not referring or investigating me?**

**A:** GPs are largely paid by the number of patients registered with them. In other countries, GPs tend to be rewarded for doing more things for patients, which may not always be a good thing, as it can encourage unnecessary investigation and treatment. UK GPs do get additional payments for providing high quality care for certain chronic diseases. If your GP does not have a high referral pattern, any savings made are retained by the local health service to invest in additional services for patients.

Originally written October 2010, reviewed June 2012

Students' Health Service  
Hampton House Health Centre  
St. Michael's Hill  
Cotham, Bristol BS6 6AU

Tel: +44 (0) 117 330 2720  
Fax: +44 (0) 117 330 2698  
admin@gp-L81133.nhs.uk  
www.bristol.ac.uk/students-health



The National Health Service:  
a guide for overseas students

The NHS (National Health Service) is the UK's state health service which provides treatment for UK residents through a wide range of health care services. Some services are free, and some you will have to pay for.

### Am I entitled to NHS treatment?

The following NHS treatment is free for everyone:

- some emergency treatment (but not follow-up treatment)
- family planning services
- treatment of certain communicable diseases
- compulsory psychiatric treatment

To qualify for any other NHS treatment, you must meet certain conditions:

If your course of study is for six months or more and you are studying in England, Wales or Northern Ireland, OR if your course is of any duration and you are studying in Scotland, you will qualify for NHS treatment from the beginning of your stay on the same basis as anyone who is ordinarily resident in the UK. Your spouse or children with you in the UK will also be entitled to NHS treatment. To receive free hospital treatment in England, Wales or Northern Ireland, your family members must be in the UK as your dependants and not, for example, as visitors. 'Family' in this situation means your husband or wife, and your children aged up to the age of 16 (or up to the age of 19 if they are in full-time education).

If your course of study is for less than six months and you are studying in England, Wales, or Northern Ireland, on a course which is substantially funded by the UK government, you will receive full NHS hospital treatment from the beginning of your stay. 'Substantially' means at least 35% government funded. You will need to provide evidence of the funding in order to qualify for free treatment. However, you might not be eligible for free GP treatment.

If you are in one of the eligible categories described above, you can register as a patient with a local Doctor (also referred to as General Practitioner or GP). GPs are doctors who are trained and experienced in diagnosing a wide range of health problems. The Doctor/GP will be based in a local office (called a Surgery) or in a Health Centre. Bristol University has its own Students' Health Service, see [www.bristol.ac.uk/students-health/](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/students-health/). You are also entitled to free treatment in NHS hospitals.

We strongly recommend that you register with a GP within the first couple of weeks of arriving in the UK, even if you do not feel ill. This is to make it easier to see the Doctor when you need to, as GPs are often unable to give appointments to people not registered at their Surgery, except in a real emergency.

To register, you will need to visit the doctor's surgery or clinic, taking a letter from your

institution as proof that you are a student. You should ask to be added to the list of NHS patients. Most doctors' surgeries have female as well as male doctors, and if you prefer you can ask to be put on a woman doctor's list. If you only want to be seen by a woman doctor, you need to say so whenever you make an appointment.

If the doctor accepts you as a patient you will be allocated an NHS number. However, being registered with a GP (doctor), and having an NHS number, does not give you automatic entitlement to free hospital treatment. The hospital providing treatment is responsible for establishing whether international students are entitled to hospital treatment without charge.

### NHS local services

You can use NHS Direct at [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk) to find your nearest:

- doctor's surgery,
- optician (for vision tests, glasses/spectacles, contact lenses etc)
- dentist
- and pharmacy (chemist).

### Reciprocal Health Care Agreements

The UK has reciprocal health care agreements for the following people:

- Nationals of countries in the European Economic Area (see note below)
- Those who are nationals of: Armenia; Azerbaijan; Georgia; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Moldova; New Zealand; Russia; Tajikistan; Turkmenistan; Ukraine; and Uzbekistan.
- Those who are residents of: Anguilla; Australia; Barbados; Bosnia and Herzegovina; British Virgin Islands; Channel Islands; Croatia; Falkland Islands; Gibraltar; Isle of Man; Macedonia; Montenegro; Montserrat; Serbia; St Helena; and Turks and Caicos Islands.

### Frequently asked questions

#### Q: What does the NHS provide for me?

A: If you are entitled to NHS treatment, the following services will be free of charge:

- consulting a GP and most other GP services (e.g. visiting a clinic)
- treatment in a hospital (both emergency and non-emergency treatment)

You may need to pay for:

- medicines prescribed by your GP
- some GP services (eg vaccinations for travel, getting a sickness certificate) - ask your GP for details of costs
- dental treatment
- optical treatment