



Your health, your rights

ACCESS: your rights when using NHS services in Scotland

Who is this factsheet for and what is it about?

- This factsheet is for anyone who uses the NHS in any part of Scotland.
- The 2012 Charter of Patient Rights and Responsibilities gives a summary of what you can expect when you use the NHS in Scotland, together with your rights, and responsibilities. The Access section of the Charter tells you about your rights when accessing NHS services. This factsheet explains what this means for you.

What can I expect from the NHS in Scotland?

The NHS in Scotland will:

- help you stay healthy, and
- care for you if you become ill.

‘NHS services are provided free of charge.’

The Charter of Patient Rights and Responsibilities 2012

Will I have to pay to get NHS care?

- The NHS will provide services based on your health or medical need.
- Most services are free for everyone who is ordinarily resident in Scotland.
- But you may have to pay for some things, for example dental treatments and for glasses, although you may be able to get help with health costs. See page 5 on where to get further information.
- You may have to pay a prescription charge if you present an English prescription
- for dispensing in Scotland.
- If you don't normally live in the UK you may have to pay for treatment if you need health care in Scotland. See page 5 for where to get more information about health care for overseas visitors.

The NHS will make sure you can be registered with a GP practice

- If you cannot register with your preferred GP practice, your local NHS board or NHS inform can help you find another. [See page 4 for information on contacting NHS inform.](#)
- When you make an appointment, you can say if you would prefer to see a particular doctor at your GP practice. The GP practice will try to meet any reasonable preference.
- A GP can remove you from the practice register in some situations, for example if you move out of the area or if you are physically or verbally abusive to people at the practice.

The NHS will try to make sure your wait for treatment is as short as possible

- The Scottish Government has set targets for the whole of Scotland about how quickly you should be able to get certain kinds of appointment, test or treatment. [See pages 4 & 5 for where to get more information about waiting times.](#)
- Under European Union (EU) arrangements you have the right to go to other European Economic Area (EEA) countries for treatment in a state hospital or, in certain circumstances, an independent hospital, although a number of conditions apply. Therefore, if you are thinking of travelling to an EEA country for treatment you should first of all discuss your options with your local NHS Board to find out, amongst other things:
 - if the treatment is covered by EU arrangements
 - the best option for your particular circumstances
 - if your local NHS Board will arrange funding or reimburse the cost of the treatment (including the level of reimbursement where applicable)
- the treatment that the NHS can provide.

The NHS will take your needs into account

- The NHS will involve patients, carers and members of the public in making decisions about services.
- Tell staff if you are worried about your care - for example, because of your culture or beliefs. Staff will respect your views and help in any way they can.

The NHS will support you to access health services

- If you want to have someone else present when a health care worker examines you, please let us know. This could be a friend, a relative, a partner, another health care worker or an independent advocate.
- If you have a mental health disorder you have a right to support from an independent advocate. NHS staff will arrange this for you.
- If you want to speak to a hospital chaplain you can ask a member of NHS staff to arrange this for you.
- If you need an interpreter or a sign-language interpreter, or have other special communication needs, ask a member of staff to arrange this for you in advance.
- If you have a clinical need for transport to get to a hospital or clinic appointment you can ask a member of staff about the Patient Transport Service.
- The independent Patient Advice and Support Service (PASS) can tell you about support services available to you. [See page 4 for more information about PASS.](#)

‘You have the right to have your needs taken into account when receiving NHS services.’

The Charter of Patient Rights and Responsibilities 2012

What can I do to help the NHS?

You can help yourself, other patients and NHS staff if you do the following.

Register with a GP practice

- Your GP is usually your first and main point of contact for access to general medical services and referrals for hospital treatment.

Register with a dental practice

- The dentist helps you look after your teeth, gums and other parts of your mouth.
- If you are unable to register with your preferred GP or NHS dental practice, NHS inform can help you find another. [See page 4 for information on contacting NHS inform.](#)

Use health services properly

- Always try to order repeat prescriptions in plenty of time. This will ensure your prescription is processed in time for you.
- Use your GP practice or local pharmacy for routine treatment and medical advice.

- **Only go to your local Accident and Emergency department (A&E) in an emergency.**
- If you are ill when your doctor's surgery is closed and you feel you can't wait until it reopens, phone NHS 24 on 08454 24 24 24 for advice.
- **If you or someone else is ill and you think your/their life is in danger, always phone 999 and ask for an ambulance.**

When you have an appointment

- Be on time.
- If you are going to be late, let staff know.
- If you can't keep your appointment, let the GP practice, dental practice, optician, hospital or clinic know as soon as possible so that it can be offered to someone else.
- If a health care worker is coming to visit you at home (for example, a health visitor or community psychiatric nurse), make sure you are in at the agreed time.
- If ambulance transport has been booked for you but you no longer need it, let the Scottish Ambulance Service know by phoning **0800 389 1333**.

Make sure NHS staff can contact you

- Your GP practice, dental practice, optician and any hospital or clinic you go to need to know how to contact you.
- Tell them if you change your name, address, phone number or email.

How can I find out more?

- You can find out more about anything in this factsheet, or get **The Charter of Patient Rights and Responsibilities**, the **Your health, your rights** factsheets or other leaflets and factsheets listed below from:
 - GP surgeries, hospitals and other places where you receive NHS services
 - www.hris.org.uk (alternative formats available) or at www.nhsinform.co.uk
- the NHS inform Helpline on **0800 22 44 88** (lines are open every day from 8am to 10pm)
- the **Patient Advice & Support Service (PASS)** at your local Citizens Advice Bureau (find your nearest bureau on the internet at www.cas.org.uk or in your local phone book).

PASS is independent and provides free, confidential information, advice and support to anyone who uses the NHS in Scotland.

Information about health rights

- **The Charter of Patient Rights and Responsibilities** tells you what you can expect from the NHS and what the NHS expects from you.
- The series of **Your health, your rights** factsheets explain what the rights and responsibilities included in the Charter mean for you:
 - **Confidentiality:** the right for your personal health information to be kept secure and confidential.
 - **Communication and participation:** the right to be informed, and involved in decisions, about health care and services.
 - **Respect:** the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
 - **Safety:** the right to safe and effective care.
 - **Feedback and complaints:** the right to have a say about your care and have any concerns and complaints dealt with.
 - **Hospital waiting times:** how quickly you should receive hospital care.

For more about health rights see:

- **Consent – it's your decision** explains how you should be involved in decisions about your health care and treatment.
- **How to see your health records** explains your right to see or have a copy of your health record.
- The leaflet **A quick guide to help with health costs** (HCS2) tells you if you can get free treatment or help with health costs. It is available from your GP surgery, local pharmacy, optician, dental practice, from Citizens Advice Bureau and Jobcentre Plus offices. You can also find it on the Scottish Government website (go to www.scotland.gov.uk).
- **Health care for overseas visitors** is a set of factsheets explaining what NHS services overseas visitors can expect to receive when they are in Scotland.

Information for young people

- **Consent – your rights** explains how you should be involved in decisions about your health care and treatment.
- **Confidentiality – your rights** tells you how the health service keeps information about you private.
- **Have your say! Your right to be heard** tells you how to give feedback or make a complaint about the NHS.

Information for carers

- **Caring and consent** explains your right to be involved in decisions about the health care of the adult you care for.

Information about health services

- **Getting NHS dental treatment in Scotland** tells you how to use NHS dental services in Scotland.
- **It's okay to ask** gives useful tips and questions you can ask during your health care appointments.
- **New medicines in Scotland – who decides what the NHS can provide?** describes the process medicines go through before NHS doctors in Scotland can routinely prescribe them.
- **The NHS Chronic Medication Service at your local pharmacy** tells you about an NHS service for people with a long-term condition.
- **Your guide to free NHS eye examinations in Scotland** gives information about free NHS eye examinations in Scotland for all UK residents.

We have tried our best to make sure that the information in this factsheet is correct. However, this factsheet is for information only and is not part of The Charter of Patient Rights and Responsibilities. It is for guidance only so you should not rely on it as a complete statement of the law.

Produced by NHS inform.



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