

Patients Travelling Abroad

NHS Policy

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

The NHS does accept responsibility for supplying ongoing medication for temporary periods abroad of up to 3 months. However, if a person is going to be abroad for more than 3 months, then they are only entitled (at NHS expense) to a sufficient supply of regular medication in order to get to their destination, where they should then find an alternative supply of that medication.

Patients residing abroad for a period of 3 months or more should be removed from the registered patient list.

Travelling out of the country for less than 3 months

For patients who inform us they will be out of the country for less than 3 months, we will provide sufficient medicines for an existing condition (e.g. asthma, diabetes...) for the period while the patient is away where it is safe to do so. Drugs that require frequent monitoring may not be prescribed where there are safety concerns. Supply of any medication is at the discretion of the GP.

Travelling out of the country for more than 3 months

Patients who inform us they will be leaving the country for more than 3 months will be prescribed sufficient medication to enable them to make alternative arrangements at their destination (up to 3 months' supply where safe to do so).

They will also be removed from our patient list. We will be pleased to re-register patients on their return to residence in the UK and can reassure patients that their electronic notes are kept on file for reference on your return.

Patients and relatives should not seek medication while they are abroad as this constitutes NHS fraud.

Prescriptions for medicines in case of illness while abroad.

GP's will only prescribe NHS prescriptions in this case for exacerbations of pre-existing illnesses. Eg antibiotics for patients who have frequent infections secondary to an underlying lung condition.

Patients should be aware that some drugs commonly prescribed in the UK may be illegal in certain countries and you should check with that country's embassy before you travel.

Travelling with your medication

You will need to find out whether there are any restrictions on taking your medicines in and out of the country you are visiting, as some medicines that are available over the counter in the UK or the country you are visiting. For example, some prescribed medicines, such as morphine, are controlled drugs, so the amount you can take abroad is limited. If you need to take more than the maximum allowance with you, you'll need a special licence from the Home Office. Some countries such as India and Turkey have very specific rules about medications that you can and cannot bring into the country.

You should always ensure that the medications are in a correctly labelled container. Carry your medication in your hand luggage (airline permitting) with a copy of your prescription. Pack a spare supply of medication in your hold luggage, in case you lose your hand luggage.

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