

Prescribing for patients living or travelling abroad treating people visiting the UK

This guidance provides prescribers with information to consider when prescribing for patients traveling abroad and for visitors to the UK seeking medical treatment.

Prescribers are reminded that they are responsible for the decisions and actions they take when prescriptions are issued and signed and, therefore they must be able to justify their actions when prescribing, for people travelling abroad or for those visiting the UK.

Prescribing for patients living or travelling abroad^{1, 2,3}

The NHS accepts responsibility for supplying ongoing medication for the treatment of existing long-term conditions **for up to three months** when a patient travels abroad,

- If a person is going to be abroad for more than three months then only a sufficient supply of his/her regular medication should be provided to enable them to get to the destination and find an alternative supply.
- NHS prescriptions must not be obtained by relatives or friends on behalf of patients who are currently abroad.
- Patients are responsible for ensuring that any drugs they take into a country conform to local laws.

If a patient is travelling abroad for longer than 3 months, they are expected to arrange for alternative access to care and supply of medication at their destination.

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

- For patients who will be out of the country for less than 3 months, it is reasonable to provide sufficient medicines for existing conditions.
- Patients out of the country for more than 3 months should be advised to register with a doctor in the country they are visiting/residing for their on-going medical needs.

Prescribing for people visiting the UK⁵⁻⁶

Anyone, regardless of nationality, residency or immigration status, may register and consult with a GP without charge. Practices can only refuse to register a patient if they have "reasonable grounds" to do so and any decision must not be discriminatory.

- Practices are also obliged to provide immediately necessary treatment to any patient in their area for up to 14 days.

- GPs should treat the patient in the same way as they would any other when making a referral to secondary care or elsewhere and refer whenever clinically appropriate - irrespective of the patient's potential chargeable status.
- Patients should be registered as temporary if they intend to reside in the practice area for more than one day but less than three months.

References

1. BMA: Prescribing in general practice guidance. Online updated 7 September 2020. Accessed 15 October 2020 <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/gp-practices/prescribing/prescribing-in-general-practice>
2. GOV.UK: Waiting to return to the UK during coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance. Published 8 April 2020. Updated 20 May 2020 Online accessed 15 October 2020.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-where-you-are-if-you-cannot-return-to-the-uk>
4. GOV.UK: Travelling with medicine containing a controlled drug guidance. Online accessed 15 October 2020. <https://www.gov.uk/travelling-controlled-drugs>
5. BMA: Access to Healthcare for overseas visitors guidance. Updated 8 September 2020. Online accessed 15 October 2020 <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/ethics/refugees-overseas-visitors-and-vulnerable-migrants/access-to-healthcare-for-overseas-visitors>
6. NHS UK: How to access NHS services in England if you're visiting from abroad. Online access 15 October 2020. <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/visiting-or-moving-to-england/>

