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Healthcare for visitors to the UK from the EU from 1 January 2021

Helpful Information on accessing NHS healthcare in England from 1 January 2021 for overseas visitors traveling to the UK from Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Switzerland and all EU Countries.

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Brexit transition: New rules for 2021

The UK has left the EU. This page tells you the new rules from 1 January 2021. It will be updated if there's new information about the UK's deal with the EU that affects what you need to do.

What you need to do

If you are visiting the UK from the EU, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein or Switzerland, you should:

- have travel or health insurance that covers the duration of your trip
- bring your European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) if you are eligible to continue using it in the UK
- bring your S1 form if you are eligible to continue using it in the UK
- bring your S2 form if you are eligible for one
- check if you need to apply for an S2 Healthcare Visa

Getting healthcare in England

This information is about getting healthcare in England. The way you access healthcare in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland could be different from England. The NHS operates a residence-based healthcare system. This means visitors to England may have to pay for NHS healthcare, depending on their circumstances.

Some services, such as accident and emergency (A&E) and visits to a general practitioner (GP) are free to everyone. Urgent treatment or treatment that cannot safely wait until you leave the country and return home will always be provided, and the matter of payment dealt with later. Only a clinician can decide if your treatment is urgent or immediately necessary.

Medically necessary treatment

If you are visiting the UK from an EU country and you fall ill or have a medical emergency during your temporary stay in England, you can use a valid EHIC issued by your home country to access healthcare. Your EHIC also covers you for the treatment of pre-existing medical conditions and for routine maternity care, providing the reason for your visit is not specifically to give birth or receive treatment.

The EHIC is not an alternative to travel insurance. It will not cover any private medical healthcare, being flown back home, or lost or stolen property. If your EHIC has been lost or stolen during your visit to England and you need a replacement, then you should contact the relevant organisation in your home country to request a Provisional Replacement Certificate (PRC). If you do not have an EHIC and cannot obtain a PRC, you may have to pay for treatment. You will be charged at 150% of the national NHS rate.

If you are visiting the UK from Norway, you will be entitled to medically necessary healthcare. You will need to show a valid Norwegian passport.

If you are studying at an accredited UK higher education institute in the UK on or before 31 December 2020, you may use your EHIC for medically necessary healthcare until the end of your course, irrespective of your nationality. You must apply to the EU Settlement Scheme if your course extends beyond 30 June 2021.

If your course of study in the UK begins after 1 January 2021 and lasts for more than 6 months, you will need to pay the immigration health surcharge as a part of your student visa application.

Seeking planned treatment in England

If you are coming to the UK from an EU country for planned health treatment, you will need to make all the necessary arrangements yourself in advance.

Planned treatment is not covered by the EHIC. You will need to arrange an S2 form from the relevant organisation in your home country before you travel to England. The S2 only covers state-provided treatment and you will not be required to pay anything yourself, except any mandatory patient contributions that patients in England would have to pay, such as prescription costs. You may have to pay for any treatment that is not covered by your S2 form.

If you are coming to the UK from Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein or Switzerland and have requested authorisation for planned treatment from the relevant authority in your home country before 31 December, you will be able to complete that treatment in the UK, even if it takes place after that date.

UK nationals who no longer live in the UK

Because the NHS is a residency-based system, under NHS rules UK nationals who move abroad on a permanent basis lose their entitlement to free NHS healthcare. UK nationals living and working in EU countries, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein or Switzerland on or before 31 December 2020 and their family members may be eligible to use NHS services without charge. You may be asked to provide evidence of your residency. Please check with the authorities in the member state in which you reside for further information.

If you are a UK national and move to the EU on or after 1 January 2021, you should not expect to be able to use NHS services for free when visiting the UK unless you have an EHIC, PRC or S2 to show your healthcare costs are funded by the EU country in which you now live, or another exemption applies.

You should take out appropriate travel insurance when visiting the UK, as you would when visiting any other country. Any treatment you may have to pay for will be charged at 150% of the national NHS rate.

Some former UK residents do not have to pay for NHS treatment when visiting England. This includes UK war pensioners, UK government employees, and UK nationals living in the EU on or before 31 December 2020.

You should check before travelling to the UK whether you qualify for an exemption from charging or will be required to pay for your treatment.

If you return to the UK permanently and you are ordinarily resident, you will be able to access NHS care without charge.

Visitors from Iceland, Liechtenstein or Switzerland

If you are visiting from Iceland, Liechtenstein or Switzerland and began a temporary visit to the UK on or before 31 December 2020, you will be able to access medically necessary treatment while your current visit lasts, even if it extends into 2021.

If your visit begins on or after 1 January 2021, you may have to pay for treatment.

Any treatment you have to pay for will be charged at 150% of the national NHS rate.

Travel insurance

The government always advises visitors to the UK to take out travel or health insurance. This means that you can reclaim any healthcare costs you are required to pay from your insurer. Check your insurance has the necessary healthcare coverage to make sure you can get the treatment you need during your visit.

Insurance is particularly important for those with a pre-existing health condition. You must tell your insurance company about any health conditions you have to make sure you can get the cover you need. Speak to your doctor for advice before you travel and make plans for how to care for your condition when you are in the UK.

You should also bring your health condition identification or a letter saying what medication you are taking.

What you'll need to enter the UK If you're an EU, EEA or Swiss citizen

Irish citizens will continue to be able to enter and live in the UK as they do now. EU, EEA and Swiss citizens will continue to be able to travel to the UK for holidays or short trips without needing a visa. You'll be able to cross the UK border using a valid passport which should be valid for the whole time you are in the UK. You will not be able to use an EU, EEA or Swiss national ID card to enter the UK from 1 October 2021 unless you:

- have settled or pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme
- have an EU Settlement Scheme family permit
- have a frontier worker permit
- are an S2 Healthcare Visitor
- are a Swiss Service Provider

In these cases, you can continue to use your national ID card to enter the UK until at least 31 December 2025. You must have the correct documents to show at the UK border if you're travelling to the UK from 1 January 2021. You will not be able to use any documents to enter the UK that are not listed here. In other cases, find out if you'll need to apply for a visa to enter the UK.

If you're a non-EEA family member of an EU, EEA or Swiss citizen

You will need a valid national passport, and one of the following:

- an EU Settlement Scheme family permit
- a UK-issued EEA family permit
- a UK-issued biometric residence card

You will not be able to use an Article 10 or Article 20 residence card issued by an EEA member state.

Overseas Visitor Team

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