



Do you need help to
access healthcare?



This leaflet explains what services the National Health Service (NHS) provides and what services are available to asylum seekers free of charge at different stages of the asylum process.

Please note that the information in this leaflet refers to people who live in England. There are variations in what help is available to in different UK regions. You'll find more information at the end of this leaflet.

What is the National Health Service?

In the UK, the National Health Service (NHS) provides a range of health services free of charge to people who need medical treatment. It does it through: family doctors (called GPs), clinics, hospitals, dentists, maternity services, opticians and chemists. The NHS can also help with contraception or family planning.

How do I get a medical treatment from a GP?

If someone is ill but does not need an urgent hospital treatment, they will usually go to see a family doctor (GP). GPs can diagnose and treat illnesses but will refer you to other specialists who are better suited to treat that illness. In many cases this means sending someone to a hospital for further medical treatment. It is very important to register with a GP before you become ill because it is through your GP that you can get access to most other health services.

You may also get health advice and information on a medical problem by calling the NHS Direct helpline on 111, www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

How do I find a GP?

A list of local doctors is available from your nearest library, the NHS Direct website, from people living in your neighbourhood or from your landlord if you live in accommodation provided by the UK Border Agency (UKBA). Make sure that you chose a doctor within the easy reach. You can choose if you would prefer a woman GP. A local surgery will generally only accept people who are living or staying in their local area. If you do not speak enough English tell the receptionist you need an interpreter when you are making an appointment to see your GP.

How do I register with a GP?

You cannot be refused registration because you are an asylum seeker. If the GP already has too many patients they can refuse to register you. In this instance you should register with a different GP. After you register you will be given a comprehensive health check by a nurse at the surgery. Once you are registered with a GP, you can make appointments to see them at the surgery.

What to do in an emergency?

If you have an accident or a sudden serious illness you should contact the Accident and Emergency department of a nearest hospital.

You can make your own way there but in most cases people should call 999 and ask for an ambulance. Medical treatment for emergencies is always free.

My asylum application has been refused, I'm appealing, what NHS services am I entitled to?

Asylum seekers are entitled to free healthcare from all NHS services while they are waiting for the outcome of their asylum application and appeals. They can receive without charge:

- GP treatment
- non-emergency treatment at a hospital including maternity services
- emergency hospital treatment at an Accident and Emergency department
- prescriptions
- NHS dental treatment, sight tests and travel costs to and from hospital
- Treatment for infectious diseases (including Tuberculosis) and sexually transmitted infections
- HIV/AIDS tests and treatment

My asylum application has been finally refused, what NHS services am I entitled to?

If your asylum claim has been finally refused and your appeals have been unsuccessful but you are unable to leave the country, you can receive without charge:

- GP treatment
- hospital treatment but only if the treatment has begun before you received the final asylum refusal
- emergency hospital treatment at an Accident and Emergency department

- prescriptions
- NHS dental treatment, sight tests and travel costs to and from hospital
- treatment for some infectious diseases (including Tuberculosis) and sexually transmitted infections
- HIV/AIDS tests

Please note that the hospital treatment that has already started should continue until you leave the country.

Will I need to pay for my medicines?

Your doctor may prescribe you medicines and give a prescription. You need to take your prescription to the nearest pharmacy. Most adults have to pay for a prescription but this is free if you have an HC2 certificate. If you are receiving asylum support from the UKBA you should have been given an HC2 certificate. If you don't get asylum support from the UKBA you will need to fill in an HC1 form to receive the HC2 certificate.

Maternity care

Maternity care includes care for pregnant women, childbirth at a hospital and postnatal care. Your GP will give you details of NHS help before, during and after childbirth. Asylum seeking women who are waiting for the outcome of their asylum application, including appeals, should not be asked to pay for the maternity services. However, women who have had a final asylum refusal may be charged for these services but the NHS guidance says that maternity care is 'immediately necessary' and must not be withheld because the woman is

unable to pay. The hospital may need information from you about your intentions to return home to help them establish the urgency of treatment needed. Please note that hospitals have discretion to provide treatment even when there is no prospect of the patient paying for it.

Further information

If you are in England, for more information about the NHS see www.nhs.uk or telephone NHS Direct on 111. If you are in Wales, see www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk In Scotland, health advice is available from NHS 24 at: www.nhs24.com In Northern Ireland, further information about NHS services is available from the Health Information Service on 0800 665 544.

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