



HEALTH SERVICES

Health services in Northern Ireland are delivered by public health service known as National Health Service (NHS) or as Health Personal and Social Services (HPSS). The majority of people use it and MOST (but not all) treatments are provided for free.

There are no restrictions regarding your access to health services.

ACCESSING HEALTH SERVICES

If you are living in Northern Ireland you are eligible for free health care. As proof of the entitlement you can use form E111.

However when you are a temporary visitor you are only entitled to free treatment if the need for it arises or if an existing condition got worse during your stay. As a proof of the entitlement you can use form E111.

If you are a posted worker or a student you will need the form E128.

There is also form E112 which is used when you come to Northern Ireland specifically for free treatment. You also need to have a referral.

FAMILY DOCTOR (GP)

REGISTRATION WITH GP, MEDICAL CARD

The central point for accessing health services is a family doctor known as a GP (general practitioner).

S/he is responsible for all your treatment and would arrange for you to see any other specialists when needed.

To use any public health services you must register with a GP.

- **The first step** you need to do is to fill in the **form HS22X**. Get the form from any Health Centre (Surgery) or from the **Central Services Agency**. Look up the Yellow Pages and the Phone book for addresses and phone numbers.
- **The next step** is finding a GP practice which will accept you as a patient.

A list of GPs is available from:

- *Central Services Agency*
- *Citizens Advice Bureau*
- *Health and Social Services Councils*
- *Health and Social Services Boards*
- *Main Public Libraries*
- *Yellow Pages*
- *Your friends, neighbours can recommend a good GP practice in the area where you live.*

Some GPs already have many patients and are not able to take on any more. If you have problems finding a GP practice contact the **Central Services Agency**.

When a GP accepts you s/he will sign your form HS22X and you will soon receive your **Northern Ireland medical card**.

Register with a GP practice as soon as possible. Do not wait until you get ill. You will also need your medical card, for example, to be able to receive treatment from a dentist or to register with another GP practice.

NB. When you register with a GP practice you will be asked how long you plan to stay. The date you give is considered as the date you will remain registered with National Health Services. After this date you will be withdrawn from the list without any further notice and you would need to re-register.

So if you are not sure when you will leave the UK it is better to say you will stay until further notice.

WHEN YOU NEED TO SEE YOUR GP

In most cases you need to **make an appointment** to see your doctor. It means you need to either ring the surgery or go there yourself and ask for a date when you can see the doctor.

Sometimes you need to wait a few days before you can see the doctor. If you need immediate treatment ask for an **urgent appointment**.

If you cannot keep your appointment let your GP know as soon as possible.

You can change your GP practice if you are not satisfied. Take your medical card to another GP practice of your choice and ask to re-register. You don't need to give any reason for doing so.

SEEING OTHER SPECIALISTS

For initial appointment with any other specialist you need to go through your GP first. S/he can then refer you further.

STATUTORY SICK PAY (SSP)

If you are employed and sick you may qualify for SSP. See Employment leaflet for more information.

EMERGENCIES

WHEN YOU NEED TO SEE A DOCTOR OUTSIDE NORMAL HOURS

All GPs must provide emergency help no matter whether you are registered with them or not.

All GPs have an emergency number if you need to see them outside their normal hours. Ask in your GP surgery/health centre for this number. If you do not have it ring the surgery and you will get the number from the answering machine.

After speaking to the doctor s/he will decide whether s/he will visit you at home or you will be asked to go to an out of hours health centre.

Generally doctors only visits patients who are seriously ill.

IN CASE OF SERIOUS SUDDEN ILLNESS OR INJURIES

Contact Accident and Emergency department (A&E department) in a hospital in your area. Find address, phone number in the Yellow Pages, or the Phone Book.

WHEN YOU NEED AN AMBULANCE

Call 999 or 112, it is a free emergency number.

All emergency services are free of charge. You do not need to be registered with a GP to access the service.

PHARMACY, PRESCRIPTIONS

Medicines are available from a pharmacy or alternatively simple medicines such as painkillers or vitamins can also be found in supermarkets and other stores.

Many medicines can only be prescribed by a doctor.

A form, which you receive from your doctor, gives you permission to buy such a medicine. It is called a **prescription**.

Medicines on prescriptions are available only from a pharmacy. Usually you need to pay for medicines on prescription. Currently it is around £6.50.

You may get a **free prescription** if you are:

- Aged under 16

- A full-time student under 19
- Aged over 60
- Getting certain Social Security Benefits
- Suffer from certain medical condition
- Pregnant, or a mother of a child up to one year old
- Or on low income



Ask your pharmacist or your local Social Security Office for more information

Chemists working in a pharmacy can also advise you on the treatment of more common illnesses. Simply ask to speak to the pharmacist in a pharmacy and explain your problem. S/he may give you advice on medicines you can take or may refer you to your GP.

DENTIST

You must have a medical card issued by the CSA to be able to register with a dentist. See above for details on how to get a medical card.

You are free to choose your dentist. A list of dentists is available from:

- Health and Social Services Councils
- Health and Social Services Boards
- Central Services Agency
- Yellow Pages

Check if a dentist of your choice will treat you on National Health Service (NHS)/ (HPSS), which means the treatment you receive will be cheaper.

You can ask your dentist also for a **treatment plan** that will give you information about a treatment you need and how much it will cost. You can agree to the treatment by signing the plan.

You may be eligible to receive free treatment from a dentist if you are:

- Under 18
- Under 19 and in full-time education

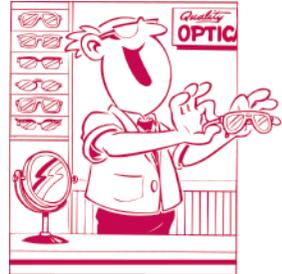
- *Pregnant or have had a baby within the last 12 months*
- *On a low income*
- *Or receiving certain Social Security Benefits*

OPTICIAN SERVICES

If you need to have your eyes tested contact a registered optician.

A list of opticians is available from:

- *Health and Social Services Boards*
- *Health and Social Services Councils*
- *Central Services Agency*
- *Citizens Advice Bureau*
- *Yellow Pages*



If you are entitled to free prescriptions you may also get help with paying for an eye test or with cost of glasses. See above, section Pharmacy and check with the optician.

FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES

If you need advice on contraception contact a GP in your practice or the **Family Planning Clinic** in your area. You will find a list in the Phone Book and the Yellow Pages. The service is free and confidential.

MATERNITY SERVICES

When pregnant you should speak to your GP who will provide you with health advice. A midwife or an obstetrician will provide further help for you. It is your GP who can refer you to maternity services.

A **Midwife** is a specially trained nurse to care for women and babies during pregnancy, labour and in the early days after the baby is born.

An **Obstetrician** is a doctor, who specialises in women's health, including pregnancy and childbirth.

You can get more information from your GP.

Start your pregnancy care as soon as possible to prevent any complications.

NOT SPEAKING ENGLISH?

If you do not speak English you can ask for an interpreter when accessing public health and social services.

Your GP practice or any other health service provider has an obligation to organise an interpreter if you need one.

This service is confidential and free.

If you are refused an interpreter contact Equality Commission or Law Centre(NI).

USEFUL CONTACTS

Central Services Agency.

2 Franklin Street
Belfast
BT2 8DQ
tel: (028) 9032 4431

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

Equality House, 7-9 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast, BT2 7DP
tel: (028) 90 500600 Textphone: (028) 90 500589,web: www.equalityni.org
Email:information@equalityni.org

Law Centre (NI)

Belfast:

124 Donegall Street
Belfast, BT1 2GY
Tel.: (028) 9024 4401

Londonderry:

9 Clarendon Street
Londonderry
BT48 7EP
Tel.: (028) 7126 2433

South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP):

Unit T7, Dungannon Business Park, 2 Coalisland Rd, Dungannon,BT71 6JT, tel: (028) 877 29002,
web:www.stepni.org, E-mail: info@stepni.org

Portadown Migrant Worker Centre:

Transport and General Workers Union, Rainbow Corner, William Street Portadown, tel: (028) 3839 9595

Cookstown Migrant Worker Project

Gortalowry House, Cookstown, tel:(028) 86763322