

5. Healthcare

The UK has a free healthcare system called the National Health Service ('NHS'). You are entitled to use NHS services. The first step is to register with a General Practitioner (GP), a local doctor.

How can I find a GP near me?

Even if you feel that you are in good health, it's important to be registered with a local doctor. You can find who is taking new patients by using the NHS finder tool here: www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-gp

What can my GP help me with?

GP surgeries give advice on:

- health problems - examinations and treatment
- sexual health, contraceptives and family planning
- vaccinations and immunisations
- mental and emotional wellbeing
- referral to other health and social services
- prescriptions for medicines.

How do I book an appointment?

Most GP surgeries have their own booking routines. You can usually book appointments over the telephone, by visiting the surgery or going online. Ask your surgery about their system and the best ways to book appointments.

Your Community Support Officer will be able to help you with this when you first arrive.

How do I get the medicine I need?

If you need medicine, your GP will give you a prescription (an official form listing the medicine). Take this to the pharmacy (also known as a chemist). Prescriptions are free if you receive welfare benefits or need contraception. If you have to pay, prescriptions are usually £9.65.

Do I need a prescription for all medicine?

No, some medicines, sometimes referred to as OTC's or over-the-counters, can be purchased in a chemist or a supermarket without needing to see a GP and getting a prescription – for example, medication for coughs, colds, indigestion etc. If you do not understand the instructions about when and how to take medication, then you should check with a chemist, pharmacist or GP surgery.

Pharmacists are experts in medicines who can help you with minor health concerns. They are qualified healthcare professionals, they can offer clinical advice and over-the-counter medicines for a range of minor illnesses, such as coughs, colds, sore throats, tummy trouble and aches and pains. If symptoms suggest it's something more serious, pharmacists have the right training to make sure you get the help you need. For example, they will tell you if you need to see a GP, nurse or other healthcare professional.

Am I entitled to free vaccines?

Yes, you can be vaccinated against serious diseases for free. Talk to your GP about getting the vaccinations you need to ensure you and your family are up to date. The majority of people in the UK have received at least one of their coronavirus vaccines. For the latest guidance on what to do if you have or suspect you have the virus, please visit the UK Government's COVID-19 advice webpage: www.gov.uk/covid

You may be eligible for a free COVID-19 vaccination through the NHS. Speak to your GP or local health clinic about how you can book this in.

You can also call 119 and ask for advice. You can ask for a translator if needed.

Accident and emergency

I have a medical emergency, where can I go to get help?

Call 999 if you have a medical emergency and are too ill to travel to your local clinic. You can ask to speak to a translator.

If you can travel, visit an Accident and Emergency (A&E) department. These departments are open 24 hours a day to treat patients. You do not need an appointment, but you may have to wait for a long time before you are treated. Find your local clinic here:

www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-an-accident-and-emergency-service.

I need minor medical attention, where can I go to get help?

You can visit an NHS urgent care centre, which will provide treatment and advice without an appointment for illnesses and injuries that are less urgent, such as burns, children with high temperatures, rashes, breathing problems or infections. Anyone can go to an urgent care centre, no matter where they are registered with a GP. If you're unsure whether you need to see someone, you can call 111 and ask for advice, you can ask to speak to a translator.

What is the nearest major hospital near me?

Abingdon: John Radcliffe Hospital, Headley Way, Headington, Oxford, OX3 9DU

Shrivenham and Watchfield: Great Western Hospital, Marlborough Road, Swindon, SN3 6BB

I need a dentist, how do I find one?

You can find the nearest dentists accepting new patients here:

www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist. Dental treatment is free for all children under the age of 18, if you are pregnant or have had a baby in the last twelve months. Treatment may also be free if you are receiving certain welfare benefits. It is important that you ask whether or not they accept NHS patients.

If you need an emergency dental treatment, call 111 for Urgent Dental Care Services. You can ask for a translator.

Eye specialists

You can receive a free NHS sight test at many opticians. It is important that you ask whether or not they accept NHS patients. If you need glasses, you will be given NHS vouchers to buy them. You will need a HC2 form for free optical treatment.

There is a list of your local NHS opticians in the Local Information section.

Mental health services

It's OK to ask for help if you feel like you are having difficulty coping on a daily basis and feel depressed or anxious. There are dedicated services in the UK that you can use if you need to talk to someone.

These are friendly, non-judgemental spaces that anyone can access, you do not need to be referred from your GP.

If you feel that you need support, you can access specialist mental health treatment and support through the Warm Welcome Afghan Service. To find out more or to sign up, call 0203 317 7979 or email afghanservice@candi.nhs.uk