

Health Care

The National Health Service (NHS)

National Health Service (NHS) treatment is primarily for the benefit of people who live in the United Kingdom (UK). UK residents contribute to the NHS scheme through National Insurance payments deducted from their income. If you are planning to live in the UK for more than 3 months, it is very important that you register with a General Practitioner (GP) in a medical practice that is closest to where you live. Most NHS treatment in the UK is accessed via the GP and you should only register with one practice. Other health professionals work closely with the GP in the medical practice providing treatments, therapies and a range of routine health screening services such as maternity care, immunisations, contraceptive and sexual health services and clinics for asthma and diabetes. If you require to be seen by a hospital doctor or specialist, you should make an appointment with your GP first, and he or she will refer you if this is necessary.

Please do not wait until you, or your family, are unwell before registering with a GP. Find your nearest GP or Dental surgery by using your postcode on the NHS Scotland website.

Registering with a GP

When you register you will be asked to complete a simple form. For this you will need to give your address and details of any past and current medical problems. The surgery will provide you with written information about the services that it provides. If you have difficulty writing or reading in English it may be useful to complete the form with someone who can help you. Interpreting services are available in the GP surgery - this may involve a three-way conversation using the telephone or it may be possible for the surgery to arrange for face-to-face interpretation to be available.

GP hours of working

Most GP surgeries are open Monday – Friday during normal office hours. Most GP surgeries operate an appointment system and you should always phone or call in person first to arrange this. Surgeries often reserve a few appointments to be allocated on the day so, when you phone, the staff may ask you for details about why you want to see the doctor.

Medical services out of normal working hours

It is important to remember that if you are in an emergency situation, whatever the time of day or night, you should call for an ambulance by dialling **999**.

However, if you are unwell or need medical advice out of normal hours (in the evenings, during the night, at weekends or in public holidays) and it is **not** an

emergency, you should make a phone call to your GP surgery. Your call will be transferred automatically to the telephone service known as **NHS 24**. **NHS 24** can provide you with a number of things. These include giving you health information or advice from a specially trained nurse over the phone. You will be referred to a Doctor if the nurse feels that this is necessary. If you are able to travel, you will be asked to attend an out-of-hours treatment centre. You should only attend a hospital, without first seeing your GP or phoning **NHS 24**, in an emergency situation.

Even if you are not registered with a GP you **can** still contact NHS 24 by phoning any of the GP practice numbers. Alternatively, contact NHS 24 directly by phoning **08454 242424**. NHS 24 can use telephone interpretation where necessary.

Remember:

- Only in emergency should you attend the hospital without first seeing your GP or phoning NHS 24
- **In the event of a serious emergency requiring immediate response, phone 999 and request an ambulance.**

Pharmacies and Medical Prescriptions

If you require medication your GP will give you a prescription to take to the local dispensing Pharmacy or Chemist. Although the current cost of a prescription is £6.65, in certain circumstances you may be exempt from this. A few medicines can be purchased 'over the counter' at less cost and the pharmacist will advise you of this. The pharmacist will be happy to discuss health matters with you and to give you advice and information.

Dental services

NHS dental services are limited in Highland. There are dentists who provide private dental care and details can be found in the telephone directory. If you require NHS dental care, phone the Highland Dental Help-line on 0845 6442271 for more information about availability. Children under 16 are entitled to free NHS dental care and treatment.

Services for families with children

If you have a child or children under 5 years old, that information will be shared with the practice Health Visitor and he or she will arrange to meet with you. Health Visitors are specially trained nurses who work with families to provide advice and support on all aspects of child development and family health. Your Health Visitor can also provide you with information about local health and education services. If your children are of school age you can

discuss concerns you may have with either the Health Visitor or School Nurse attached to the school. When your child starts school the School Nurse will review your child's health and check whether immunizations are complete. If the primary immunization programme has been completed your child will be offered a booster vaccine between the ages of 13 and 18. The BCG vaccination is now only given to children who live in an area with a high rate of Tuberculosis (TB) or whose parents or grandparents were born in a TB high prevalence country. Parents will always be informed by the school and their consent must be obtained prior to any procedure. Children under the age of 16 years are entitled to NHS dental treatment. As dental services do not routinely visit schools, parents themselves will need to register their child with a dentist.

Sexual Health Services

Your sexual health is important. Most GPs provide sexual health services. In addition, the following agencies provide free, friendly, professional, confidential services for sexual health, contraception and relationships.

Highland Sexual Health

Clinics around the Highlands offer:

Specialist advice and treatment

Contraception and condoms

Support and counselling

Pregnancy testing

Call (01463) 704202 for details of clinics and an appointment.

Highland Brook

Brook Advisory Centres offer free and confidential sexual health advice and services specifically for young people under 25. They have an office in Inverness.

This is a "Drop-in" service – no appointment is needed. Services include:

Support and counselling

Pregnancy testing

Contraception and condoms

Clinics on Monday, Thursday 4pm – 7pm; Saturday mid-day – 3pm

Address:

77 Church Street

Inverness IV1 1ES (01463) 242434

Terrence Higgins Trust Highland

The Terrence Higgins Trust offers information and support on all aspects of sexual health and sexuality.

Make an appointment by calling (01463) 711585.

HIV counselling and testing available.

Condoms to collect or by post.

Address:

34 Waterloo Place
Inverness
IV1 1NB

Marriage Counselling Highland

Support and counselling for all types of relationships
Relate-trained psychosexual therapists
6 View Place Inverness
(01463) 712888

Mental Health Services

There are Community Mental Health Teams in all areas of Highland.

If you have a mental illness or feel you may require support from the mental health service you should first of all discuss this with your GP.

Your GP will assess your situation and if necessary make a referral to the local Community Mental Health Team. The team will normally contact you within 4 weeks, or sooner if it is an urgent referral.

The service you receive will depend on your needs. This may range from a referral to a self-help worker to an assessment appointment at an Out Patient Clinic with a Psychiatrist, or in rare cases, an admission to New Craigs hospital in Inverness.

A plan of care will then be agreed with you to meet your needs.

In emergencies you can telephone NHS 24 on **08454 242424** where trained mental health staff will discuss your needs and may arrange for someone to assess you or ask you to attend your local Accident and Emergency unit.

Useful URLs

Scottish National Health Service <http://www.show.scot.nhs.uk>

Brook Advisory Centres <http://www.brook.org.uk/content/>

Terrence Higgins Trust <http://www.tht.org.uk/>