

## IMMUNISATION ADVICE AND PRESCRIBING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PEOPLE INTENDING TO TRAVEL ABROAD

This guidance provides advice and recommendations for prescribing emergency or routine repeat medication and vaccinations for people travelling abroad. It is aimed at all contractors and providers of NHS services within the Mid and South Essex Health Care Partnership who provide immunisation and travel advice services.

### Prescribing medication for existing long term conditions

When a patient travels abroad, provision of medication for the treatment of existing long term conditions may be provided at NHS expense. In line with the Medicines Standards, patients going abroad should normally be prescribed 28 days medication only. At the discretion of the GP this may be increased to 56 days or 84 days in exceptional circumstances. If a patient is going to be abroad for more than three months then only a sufficient supply of the regular medication should be provided to enable them to get to the destination and arrange an alternative supply. Prescribers are clinically and legally responsible for any results of a decision to prescribe. In view of this, it would not be considered good clinical practice for a prescriber to prescribe large amounts of repeat medication to a patient going abroad for an extended period, since the prescriber will not be able to monitor the patient.

It may be helpful for the practice to provide the patient with a list of current medications and a summary of the patient's relevant medical history.

NHS England Standard General Medical Services Contract states that patients should be removed from the practice list where notification has been received that the patient intends to be away from the UK for a period of at least three months or has been absent from the UK for a period of more than three months. Removal shall take effect from the date of the departure, or the date on which the practice notification of departure is received by NHS England - whichever is later.

NHS prescriptions must not be obtained by relatives or friends on behalf of patients who are currently abroad.

Patients can apply for a UK Global Health Insurance Card (UK GHIC) or a UK European Health Insurance Card (UK EHIC), which can be used to access medically necessary state provided healthcare when visiting an EU country. A EHIC or GHIC is not a substitute for travel insurance and may not cover all health costs. It is recommended to have comprehensive travel insurance as well as the card.

### Travel medication and emergency 'just in case' medication

NHS England Standard General Medical Services Contract states that NHS patients can be charged for prescribing or providing drugs, medicines or appliances (including a collection of such drugs, medicines or appliances in the form of a travel kit) which a patient requires to have in their possession solely in anticipation of the onset of an ailment or occurrence of an injury while they are outside the UK, but for which they are not requiring treatment when the medicine is prescribed. Therefore, such emergency travel medications are not to be prescribed on the NHS.

Prescribers are therefore not required to provide prescriptions for medication which is requested solely in anticipation of the onset of an ailment whilst outside the UK, but for which treatment is not required at the time of prescribing (for example, travel sickness, diarrhoea, jet lag). Requests for prescription only medicines that are required for travel 'just in case' of illnesses contracted, should be treated as a private service (for example, antibiotics, oral rehydration sachets or treatments for altitude sickness). The practice may charge for the provision of a private prescription.

Patients should be advised to purchase these items locally prior to travel, and advice is available from community pharmacists if required. For conditions unresponsive to self-medication, the patient should normally seek medical attention abroad.

Drugs such as norethisterone (and medroxyprogesterone acetate) for postponement of menstruation whilst abroad, are not recommended locally for prescribing on the NHS and patients may be offered and charged a private prescription.

### **Malaria prophylaxis**

Antimalarials are not available at NHS expense for malaria prophylaxis. Most medicines for the prevention of malaria are available for purchase over the counter at community pharmacies. If a prescription only medicine is required for malaria prophylaxis this should be prescribed privately and the practice may charge for the provision of the private prescription. Information should be provided on the importance of mosquito nets, suitable clothing and insect repellents to protect against mosquito bites.

For further information regarding malaria prophylaxis (including children's dosing) and vaccine requirements please refer to a professional travel website such as [TravelHealthPro \(NaTHNaC\)](#) or [TRAVAX](#).

### **Travel vaccinations**

The [British Medical Association](#) (BMA) has provided guidance on the current regulations for travel vaccines and the responsibility of its members in providing travel care services for their patients.

Certain vaccines are available on the NHS for travel as part of additional services under the General Medical Services and Personal Medical Services contracts. Patients should not be charged a fee for these specified travel immunisations if a service is provided to registered patients. Practices can opt out of providing a travel vaccination service and refer patients to a travel clinic. These vaccines are usually free because they protect against diseases thought to represent the greatest risk to public health if they were brought into the country. Some vaccines are not available on the NHS for travel and can be given as a private service.

NHS patients are entitled to receive advice on recommended vaccines for travel free of charge.

#### Vaccinations available at NHS expense

The following travel vaccines are available at NHS expense and registered patients must not be charged a fee for administering the vaccine:

- Hepatitis A
- Typhoid
- Combined hepatitis A and typhoid
- Tetanus, diphtheria and polio combined
- Cholera

These vaccines are available via two different routes:

- The vaccine is purchased by the practice, administered at the practice and a 'personally administered' payment is claimed through FP34.
- The vaccine is prescribed on FP10 prescription for the patient to collect from a community pharmacy and bring to the practice for administration. A prescription charge is payable to the pharmacy unless the patient is exempt. In this situation no claim for 'personal administration' fees should be made through FP34.

#### Vaccinations not available at NHS expense

The following travel vaccines are not available at NHS expense:

- Japanese encephalitis
- Tick-borne encephalitis
- Meningitis ACWY (quadrivalent meningococcal meningitis vaccine; A, C, Y and W135)
- Rabies
- Tuberculosis
- Yellow fever
- Hepatitis B



- Combined hepatitis A and B vaccine is not supported for prescribing on the NHS for travel purposes by Mid and South Essex CCGs. Patients requiring both vaccines for travel purposes should be offered hepatitis A vaccine as an NHS service and hepatitis B vaccine separately as a private service.

#### Charges for private provision

For travel vaccines not available on the NHS, the practice may charge the registered patient for:

- The vaccine (for stock purchased and held by the practice).
- Administration of the vaccine.
- Provision of a private prescription (if a private prescription is provided to obtain the vaccine).

Patients should be advised to compare prices as there may be variation in the amount that individual pharmacies will charge to supply the vaccine. Alternatively, practices may choose to buy in the vaccine directly and charge patients for the cost of the vaccine.

Possible charges after vaccination include:

- Post-vaccination serological testing in the case of Hepatitis B administration, if performed for travel reasons.
- Provision of certification of immunisation (for example, confirmation of Meningitis ACWY135 administration).

The level of charges should be determined by the practice. It may be advisable to develop a practice policy which is available to patients, for example, in the form of a leaflet or as a section on the practice website.

NHS Patient Group Directions cannot be used for the administration of travel vaccines within a private travel clinic operating in a GP practice.

#### **COVID-19: considerations for travel**

Coronavirus (COVID-19) has severely disrupted international travel. Official guidance can change at short notice to reflect required changes in pandemic response and this may impact planned travel. Countries can lift or implement travel bans or quarantine measures to curtail the spread of COVID-19. Patients should refer to government guidance for travel restrictions, including testing and quarantine rules when travelling abroad from England, and check foreign travel advice for the country that is being visited.

Travel insurance is highly recommended. Patients should always check their policy for exclusions as some policies may not cover claims related to COVID-19. Travel advice changes at short notice, therefore, ensure that the policy includes cover if the return trip is cancelled or postponed.

Receiving a COVID-19 vaccine for the purpose of travel is not in line with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) and is not recommended. Second doses should not be offered earlier than the recommended schedule for travel purposes. Re-vaccination with alternative brands should not be offered in order to comply with international travel requirements. If a patient is moving abroad for longer than 3 months, they cease to be an NHS patient. Under pandemic arrangements patients are able to receive a vaccine abroad if they meet the requirements within the country being visited.

#### **Controlled drugs and personal licenses**

- Department of Health guidance recommends that in general controlled drugs should not normally be prescribed in quantities of greater than 1 month's supply.
- Exceptionally (to cover a justifiable clinical need and after consideration of any risk) a prescription can be issued for a longer period, but the rationale should be documented in the patient's clinical records.
- A Home Office personal license is not required if visiting the UK and travelling with:
  - schedule 5 drugs
  - schedule 4 (part II) drugs
  - less than 3 months' supply or travelling for less than 3 months with any schedule 2, 3 or 4 (part I) drugs which have been lawfully prescribed in the country of habitual residence.



- If there are exceptional reasons and a need to import more than 3 months' supply of a schedule 2, 3 or 4 (part 1) drug, contact [dfliu.ie@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:dfliu.ie@homeoffice.gov.uk) at least 15 working days before the intended date of travel to apply for a personal license.
- If entering the UK with schedule 2, 3 or 4 (part 1) drugs carry a letter of proof that the medicine was prescribed to you.
- If a patient is prescribed controlled drugs abroad and wants to return to the UK with them, they would need to email the Home Office [dfliu.ie@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:dfliu.ie@homeoffice.gov.uk).
- It is advised that if leaving the UK with a medicine containing a controlled drug ensure that proof of property such as a copy of the prescription or a letter is obtained from the clinician.
- Other countries have their own import laws for prescription medicines and controlled drugs.
- It is also advisable to check with the embassy, consulate or high commission of the country to be visited regarding their policy on the import of controlled drugs, as the legal status of controlled drugs varies between countries and other countries have their own import laws for prescription medicines and controlled drugs. [GOV.UK](http://GOV.UK) has a full list of foreign embassies in the UK.
- Email [dfliu.ie@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:dfliu.ie@homeoffice.gov.uk) for further advice on leaving the UK with controlled drugs.

<b>References</b>	<p>PrescQIPP. Travel vaccines (July 2018): <a href="https://www.prescqipp.info/umbraco/surface/authorisedmediasurface/index?url=%2fmedia%2f3530%2fb196-travel-vaccines-31.pdf">https://www.prescqipp.info/umbraco/surface/authorisedmediasurface/index?url=%2fmedia%2f3530%2fb196-travel-vaccines-31.pdf</a></p> <p>BMA. Prescribing in general practice (updated 26 July 2021): <a href="https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/gp-practices/prescribing/prescribing-in-general-practice">https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/gp-practices/prescribing/prescribing-in-general-practice</a></p> <p>BMA. Travel vaccinations (updated 7 September 2020): <a href="https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/gp-practices/vaccinations/travel-vaccinations">https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/gp-practices/vaccinations/travel-vaccinations</a></p> <p>BMA. Hepatitis B vaccinations (updated 7 September 2020): <a href="https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/gp-practices/vaccinations/hepatitis-b-vaccinations">https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/gp-practices/vaccinations/hepatitis-b-vaccinations</a></p> <p>GOV.UK. Travel abroad from England during coronavirus (COVID-19) (last updated 4 October 2021): <a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-abroad-from-england-during-coronavirus-covid-19">https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-abroad-from-england-during-coronavirus-covid-19</a></p> <p>GOV.UK. Controlled drugs: personal licences (last updated 16 September 2020): <a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/controlled-drugs-personal-licences">https://www.gov.uk/guidance/controlled-drugs-personal-licences</a></p> <p>NHS. Can I take my medicine abroad? (last reviewed 23 September 2021): <a href="https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/medicines/can-i-take-my-medicine-abroad/">https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/medicines/can-i-take-my-medicine-abroad/</a></p> <p>NHS England and NHS Improvement Items which should not routinely be prescribed in primary care: Guidance for CCGs (Version 2, June 2019): <a href="https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/items-which-should-not-routinely-be-prescribed-in-primary-care-v2.1.pdf">https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/items-which-should-not-routinely-be-prescribed-in-primary-care-v2.1.pdf</a></p> <p>NHS. Travel vaccinations (last reviewed 10 December 2018): <a href="https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/travel-vaccinations/">https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/travel-vaccinations/</a></p> <p>NHS England Standard General Medical Services Contract (May 2014): <a href="https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/gms-contract-04-14.pdf">https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/gms-contract-04-14.pdf</a></p> <p>NHS. Applying for healthcare cover abroad (GHIC and EHIC) (last reviewed 29 June 2021): <a href="https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/apply-for-a-free-uk-global-health-insurance-card-ghic/">https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/apply-for-a-free-uk-global-health-insurance-card-ghic/</a></p> <p>GOV.UK. Immunisation against infectious disease-The Green Book (last updated 27 November 2020): <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immunisation-against-infectious-disease-the-green-book">https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immunisation-against-infectious-disease-the-green-book</a></p> <p>GOV.UK. Bringing medicine containing a controlled drug into the UK: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/travelling-controlled-drugs">https://www.gov.uk/travelling-controlled-drugs</a></p>
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