

Healthcare Information for Visitors & Students from the European Economic Area (EEA)



This leaflet provides information for all residents of EEA countries* and Switzerland (including British citizens living in one of these countries) who may wish to use the National Health Service (NHS) while in England.

If you are visiting England on holiday or to study, please bring a valid European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) issued by your home country with you, otherwise you may be charged for any NHS hospital treatment you need.

An EHIC covers all immediate and clinically necessary treatment during your visit until your return home.

If you cannot provide the hospital with either a valid EHIC or a Provisional Replacement Certificate (PRC) you may have to pay for your treatment if you are not resident in the UK and are not exempt for any other reason.

*Find out if your country is part of the EHIC scheme on the back of this leaflet

Why bring a European Healthcare Insurance Card (EHIC)?

The NHS provides free hospital treatment to people who are 'Ordinarily resident' in the UK. This means people living lawfully in the UK, voluntarily and for settled purposes as part of the regular order of their life. People who do not normally live in this country are not automatically entitled to use the NHS for free. All EEA citizens, including UK citizens, need to provide satisfactory documentary evidence of entitlement in order to receive free hospital care; otherwise they will be charged for their treatment.

If you are resident in an EEA member state and are visiting or studying in England you can access free NHS treatment that is medically necessary during your stay by showing a valid EHIC. This allows the UK to recover the cost of your care from your country of residence.

What Treatment Is Covered by an EHIC?

All treatment that is medically necessary before an EEA visitor's planned date of return is covered as long as they have a valid EHIC. An NHS medical professional needs to make a medical decision on this. In other words, an EHIC covers treatment which cannot wait until the patient's return to their home country. This includes treatment of pre-existing medical conditions and routine maternity care, providing the reason for a visit to the UK is not specifically to give birth.

Planned treatment

If you are coming to England for planned treatment you will need to make arrangements yourself in advance. Planned treatment is not covered by the EHIC and unless you have valid documentation you may be charged for treatment. You can access planned treatment in England by obtaining an S2 form from your health care provider in your home country or you can seek agreement from them that they will reimburse you for any state or private healthcare that you purchase in England.**

**Only the S2 route is available to visitors from Switzerland

Holders of a registered S1 form

If you are a UK state pensioner or frontier worker, living in another EEA country or Switzerland and your healthcare is paid for by the UK by virtue of an S1 form that you have registered in your country of residence; you have the right to return to England to receive treatment in the same way as someone ordinarily resident in England.

You will need to show a copy of your S1 when registering with a GP or seeking treatment from a hospital. For more information on how to access treatment, you should contact the NHS provider directly as their requirements may vary.

This information also applies to family members of state pensioners of the principal S1 holder who are registered on the S1 form (unless they are entitled to hold a non-UK EHIC).

Lost or forgotten your EHIC?

If you are covered for healthcare in another country and eligible for an EHIC but have lost or forgotten to bring it with you, and you need hospital treatment, you should apply for a Provisional Replacement Certificate (PRC) immediately. You will need to contact your domestic healthcare provider and ask them to fax a PRC to the NHS hospital where you require treatment. It is your responsibility to make these arrangements. Once a valid PRC is received by the hospital, you will be eligible for the same free medical treatment as you would using an EHIC.

Do not have a valid EHIC or cannot obtain a PRC?

If you cannot show a valid EHIC or PRC you may be charged for your hospital care during your visit. This excludes care provided in the Accident & Emergency (A&E) department if required. Almost all other care including emergency treatment received outside an A&E department is subject to a charge. The hospital trust will require payment from any patient who cannot produce an EHIC or PRC, or who cannot prove entitlement under UK domestic regulations at the time of their treatment. Most EEA permanent residents will be able to obtain a refund for all or part of their treatment when they return home from their healthcare provider.

Need more information?

Please visit NHS Choices for more information on how to access NHS healthcare services.

www.nhs.uk/visitingengland

Details on how to obtain an EHIC can be found on the European Commission website.

<http://ec.europa.eu>

EHIC Scheme Countries

*Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden. EEA also refers to Switzerland for the purposes of this leaflet.

