

Travel abroad policy

August 2017

Version 2.0

This supersedes version 1.0

Review due in August 2019

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Document location

Copies of this document can be obtained from:

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Revision history

REVISION DATE	ACTIONED BY	SUMMARY OF CHANGES	VERSION
24.07.17	S Jacobs	Full review of travel abroad guidance September 2013	1.1
31.07/17	S Jacobs	Changes following comments from CCG medicines optimisation leads	1.2

The changes made to version 1.0 during the production of the updated version 2.0 are shown in table 1.

Table 1

Section	Section name	Changes within updated version 2.0 August 2017
	Format	Updated format to current GMSS template.
	Title	Changed from guidance to policy
	Document control	Added.
	Contents page	Added.
	Executive summary	Updated to include new statements on added sections. Changes made for clarity and consistency.
1	Background	No changes
2	Scope	Minor changes to text.
3	Travel advice	Added – new section.
4	Travel abroad for less than 3 months	Changes to text for clarity and consistency. Added maximum of 1 month supply for medication requiring monitoring.
5	Travel abroad for more than 3 months	Significant changes to text: NHS legislation, GP responsibilities, patient responsibilities, maximum prescription length.
6	Travel vaccinations	Significant changes to text: GP contract, vaccines allowed and not allowed sections added, advice for patients added.
7	Malaria prophylaxis	Condensed section. Added link to advice for patients.
8	Controlled drugs	Minor changes – rearranged and updated text.
9	Syringes and needles	Added – new section.
10	Prevention of DVT	Added – new section.
11	References	Updated – added new and removed out of date references.

Approvals

This document must be approved by the following before distribution:

NAME	DATE OF ISSUE	VERSION
GMSS	31/07/2017	2
GMMMGM		2.0

Final version available on GMMMGM website.

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Executive summary

- Under NHS legislation, the NHS ceases to have responsibility for people when they leave the UK and they should be removed from the GP's list of patients¹.
- All NHS patients are entitled to free travel advice from their GP practice.
- If the NHS patient is returning within three months then the normal prescription quantity, (usually one but no more than three months), can be issued, providing it is clinically appropriate.
- If a person is going abroad for more than three months, all they are entitled to at NHS expense is sufficient supply (no more than 1 month) to get to the destination where they should register with a local doctor for continuing supply; this may need to be paid for by the patient.
- GPs are not required to provide prescriptions for just in case medication for treatment that is not required at the time of prescribing.
- Certain travel vaccinations can be provided free for travel use. Others attract a private charge.
- GPs may NOT prescribe malaria prophylaxis on the NHS. Treatment can be purchased or provided on a private prescription.
- Patients who are carrying controlled drugs abroad may require a personal export or import licence or a letter from the prescribing doctor.
- Compression stocking should not be prescribed on the NHS for the purpose of preventing deep vein thrombosis on long haul flights.

1. Background

- 1.1 Patients from the UK who travel abroad for short or lengthier periods of time may require advice on how to transport and manage their medicines whilst abroad, how to access medicines for their long term conditions whilst abroad and guidance on what immunisations and preventative medicines might be required for their episode of travel.
- 1.2 This guidance aims to give direction on these matters, signpost healthcare professions to additional sources of information and clarify the responsibilities of clinicians with regard to supplies of medicines for patients who travel.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This guidance applies to all services contracted by or delivered by the NHS across Greater Manchester, including:
 - GP practices, any other primary care providers, acute hospitals, NHS community providers, out-patient clinics, and independent providers providing NHS commissioned care.

2.2 This covers the provision of prescriptions to a patient registered on the list of a general medical practitioner, or seen as a temporary resident.

2.3 In the case of travel vaccinations it may also apply to the provision of private services to members of the public who are not registered with the practice.

3. Travel advice

3.1 NHS patients are entitled to receive travel advice including advice on recommended immunisations and malaria prophylaxis free of charge. This is classed as an essential service within the General Medical Services contract.

3.2 Practices should ensure that when travel advice is given it is current and based on expertly sourced information. Reliable information can be obtained from:

- The National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC): www.nathnac.org
- Travel health Pro: www.travelhealthpro.org.uk

3.3 The Home Office website contains travel advice for patients by individual country: [GOV UK: Foreign travel advice](http://gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)

3.4 NHS Choices offers wide ranging advice for patients intending to travel or live abroad: [NHS Choices: Before you travel](http://nhs.uk/choices/before-you-travel) , [NHS Choices: Travel health](http://nhs.uk/choices/travel-health)

4. Travelling abroad for three months or less

4.1 Pre-existing condition

If the patient is returning within three months then the normal prescription quantity, (usually one but no more than three months), can be issued, providing it is clinically appropriate.

If the GP does not consider it to be clinically appropriate to issue the full quantity then the patient should be advised to register with a local doctor for continuing medication. This includes all medication that requires monthly monitoring e.g. warfarin.

4.2 Just in case treatments

Where there is no pre-existing condition, a patient is not entitled to medicines at NHS expense. Requests for medicines that are required for travel 'just in case' of illnesses contracted, for example travel sickness tablets and diarrhoea treatments, should be treated as a private transaction or patients should be advised to buy items locally prior to travel.

Prophylactic antibiotics should not be prescribed (even on a private prescription) due to the lack of confirmed diagnosis, risk of inappropriate use and increasing antibiotic resistance.

4.3 People travelling within Europe should be advised to carry the European Health Insurance Card (**EHIC**) at all times; this gives entitlement to local health care arrangements. Patients are advised to check specific entitlements and appropriate health advice prior to travel and obtain adequate holiday insurance cover³.

4.4 **Emergency travel kits** are available in two forms, neither of which are available on the NHS. The 'basic' kit contains items such as disposable needles and syringes, sutures and dressings. The 'POM' kit contains additional items such as plasma substitutes and requires a private prescription. The kits, or a list of suppliers, are available through travel clinics or community pharmacies.

5. Living or travelling abroad for more than three months

- 5.1 Under the [NHS \(General Medical Services Contracts\) regulations 2004](#) when a person leaves the UK with the intention of being away for a period of more than 3 months, that person should be removed from the doctor's list. This remains in the current contract.
- 5.2 Under legislation, the NHS's duty of care regarding prescribing ends when a patient has been absent, or intends to be away from the United Kingdom for a period of more than 3 months¹. However, to ensure good patient care the following guidance is offered.
- 5.3 Medication required for a pre-existing condition should be provided in sufficient quantity to cover the journey and to allow the patient to register with a local doctor abroad. This should be no more than one month's supply.
- 5.4 The patient should be advised to register with a local doctor for continuing medication; this may need to be paid for by the patient⁴. It is advised that patients check with the manufacturer that medicines required are available in the country being visited. It is also worth advising that some UK prescription only medicines can be purchased without a prescription from pharmacies in some countries.
- 5.5 GP practices are not responsible for finding a doctor or ensuring medication supplies are available at the destination.
- 5.6 Patients who return to the UK for the purpose of obtaining medication, or who use a local proxy to request prescriptions on their behalf should be refused supply. Patients should be directed to local services in their country of residence with the offer of supplying appropriate medical notes and a list of current medicines to their qualified medical practitioner.

6. Travel immunisations

- 6.1 The GP contract includes the provision of vaccines and immunisations as an additional service. Any practice that opts out of this provision should inform the CCG / NHS England team. Any practice that does opt out cannot administer travel vaccines.
- 6.2 **Travel vaccinations available on NHS.**
Travel vaccines that are available via the **NHS** for which reimbursement is received are:
- cholera
 - typhoid
 - hepatitis A
 - polio (as combined diphtheria, tetanus and polio vaccine)
 - combined hepatitis A and typhoid
- 6.3 These can be made available by either:
- Purchased by the practice and a 'personally administered' payment claimed through FP34PD
 - Obtained by the patient on FP10. Normal prescription charges apply. The practice must not claim for 'personal administration'.
- 6.4 General information on immunisation, vaccine safety and individual diseases is available in 'The Green Book'. [GOV UK: Immunisations against infectious diseases](#)

6.5 Travel vaccinations not available on NHS

Patients (including those not on a GP's list), may be charged privately for travel vaccines not reimbursable on the NHS. Private charges can include the cost of the vaccines/ fee for writing a private prescription and a charge for the administration. Practice charges should be made available to patients.

6.6 Further advice for patients is available at: [NHS Choices: Travel vaccinations](#)

7. Malaria prophylaxis

7.1 The Department of Health has directed that GPs may NOT prescribe medication for malaria prophylaxis.

7.2 Some medicines for the prevention of malaria are classed a Pharmacy 'P' medicines and available for purchase 'over the counter' at community pharmacies.

7.3 Prescription only medicines for malaria prophylaxis should be prescribed on private prescriptions.

Practices can charge for the provision of a private prescription.

7.4 Local community pharmacies have access to up to date advice about appropriate prophylactic regimens and can advise travellers' accordingly.

7.5 Patients should be advised about the importance of the prevention of malaria⁵.

8. Controlled drugs

8.1 Patients who are travelling abroad for less than three months AND carrying less than three months' supply of controlled drugs will not need a personal import or export licence to enter or leave the UK.

8.2 The Home Office advises that all patients travelling abroad with controlled drugs should carry a letter from the prescribing doctor with the following details⁶:

- patient's name, address and date of birth
- the outward and return dates of travel
- the countries being visited
- a list of the drugs the patient will be carrying, including dosages and total amounts

There is no allowance in the GMS contract to reimburse GPs for providing this service. It would be up to the discretion of the GP practice whether to charge patients in these circumstances.

8.3 Controlled drugs should be:

- carried in original packaging
- carried in hand luggage (airline regulations permitting)
- carried with a letter from the prescribing doctor
- carried with a valid personal import/export licence (if necessary; see below)

8.5 Patients will require a personal import or export license if:

- they are travelling for more than 3 months or
- they are carrying more than 3 months' supply of controlled drugs

8.6 A personal licence has no legal standing outside the UK and is intended to assist travellers passing through UK customs controls with their prescribed controlled drugs.

8.7 Patients should be advised to contact the embassy, consulate or high commission of the country of destination (or any country through which they may be travelling) regarding the legal status and local policy on the importation of controlled drugs⁷.

9. Syringes and needles on flights

9.1 People treated with insulin or other medication requiring injection will need a letter from their GP to allow syringes/needles (prefilled pens) and other equipment to be carried in hand luggage. A charge may be made to the patient by the GP for writing a letter.

9.2 Patients often use the repeat prescription request slip which has all the relevant details.

9.3 The patient should be advised to check the exact requirements with their individual airline(s).

10. Prevention of deep vein thrombosis (DVT)

10.1 Compression stockings

Travellers at moderate risk of DVT are advised to use below knee graduated compression stockings⁸.

Compression stockings should not be issued on the NHS for the sole indication of preventing travel related DVT.

10.2 Low molecular weight heparins (LMWH)

Prevention of travel-related deep vein thrombosis is an off-label indication of LMWH.

LMWH should only be prescribed for high risk patients, travelling for more than 8 hours, following specialist advice (GREEN on GMMMG RAG list).

Patients will require a letter from the prescriber to allow them to carry syringes and needles in hand luggage.

10.3 Aspirin prophylaxis

Aspirin is not recommended for the prevention of travel-related deep vein thrombosis.

11. References

1. The National Health Service (General Medical Services Contracts) Regulations 2004:
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/291/pdfs/uksi_20040291_en.pdf
2. NHS Choices: Can I take my Medicines Abroad?
<http://www.nhs.uk/chq/pages/1074.aspx>
3. NHS choices: Healthcare abroad:
<http://www.nhs.uk/nhsengland/Healthcareabroad/pages/Healthcareabroad.aspx>
4. NHS choices: Moving abroad, planning your healthcare:
<http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad/movingabroad/Pages/Introduction.aspx>
5. NHS Choices: Malaria prevention:
<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Malaria/Pages/Prevention.aspx>
6. UK Border Agency: Travelling with controlled drugs:
<https://www.gov.uk/travelling-controlled-drugs>
7. Gov.UK: Embassies in the UK: Importing controlled drugs
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/contact-an-embassy>
8. NICE CKS: DVT prevention for travellers, March 2013:
<https://cks.nice.org.uk/dvt-prevention-for-travellers#!topicsummary>