

NHS services for older people



Age Scotland Information and Advice

Table of Contents

1 How to keep well – who can help	3
2. Choosing your GP	2
2.1 If you want to change your GP	3
2.2 Registering as a temporary resident	3
3 Out of hours services and emergencies	3
4 Health Rights and Responsibilities Information leaflets	3
5 NHS services to help you stay well	4
5.1 Prescriptions and managing your medicines	4
5.2 Seasonal flu jab	4
5.3 Immunisation against pneumonia	4
5.4 General annual health check at 75	5
5.5 Chiropody	5
5.6 Screening	5
6 Other NHS services	6
6.1 NHS eye tests	6
6.2 Hearing tests	7
6.3 Dental care from the NHS	7
7 Falls Risk Assessment or Prevention	7
8 NHS Services on discharge from hospital	8
9 NHS minor ailment service from your local pharmacy	8
10 Travel abroad in Europe and free health care	9
11 Help with Health Costs	9
11.1 NHS Low Income Scheme	9
11.2 War Pensioners	10
11.3 Refunds	10
12 Travelling to appointments	10
12.1 Practical difficulties with travel	10
12.2 Costs of travel	11
13 Complaints about NHS health services	11
14 Further Information	13

1 How to keep well – who can help

Getting help when feeling unwell

When you feel unwell, you do not always need to seek help from your GP practice. Other services may be able to help you directly or put your mind at rest. These include:

- your local pharmacist
- NHS 24
- minor injuries unit.

1.1 Local pharmacist

Pharmacists can give advice if you have a sore throat, cold or aches and pains and can suggest non-prescription medicines to ease your symptoms. They can also help you decide if you need to see a doctor. As experts on medicines, they can answer questions about prescription items you take or non-prescription remedies that you want to buy as well as how different medicines may affect each other.

You can find your nearest late-opening pharmacy by calling **NHS inform** on **0800 22 44 88** or by visiting www.nhs24.com/findlocal

1.2 NHS 24

NHS 24 is a free, national, confidential 24-hour telephone line operating in Scotland. It is free to call by dialling **111** from both landlines and mobiles and provides a single point of access for people needing medical or dental help or advice in a non-life-threatening situation. NHS 24 also offer an online self-help guide (www.nhs24.com/selfhelpguide) which provides information and advice on some common symptoms which may help you find an answer without having to call the telephone line.

1.3 Minor injuries units

These units are for patients with non-life-threatening injuries. They are often located in hospital grounds and can treat broken bones, minor burns, head and eye injuries as well as insect and animal bites. The units are run by highly experienced Emergency Nurses who can assess and treat minor injuries. They can also arrange for you to be transferred elsewhere if they find a more serious problem.

You can find your nearest unit by calling **NHS Inform** on **0800 22 44 88**.

1.4 General Practitioner (GP)

GP practices offer a range of services to prevent and treat illnesses and support people with long-term conditions. GPs act as a gateway to health services in the community and can refer you to hospital or for other specialist treatment should you require it.

2. Choosing your GP

Most people register with a GP based in the GP practice nearest to their home. You do not have to choose a GP from your local service, but if you want to choose a doctor in a different area you will have to talk to that practice as GPs may need to visit patients quickly in an emergency.

No GP (even your local one) has to accept you as a patient. However, if the GP does refuse to accept you, then they must have reasonable grounds for doing so, such as the practice register being full.

If you are choosing a GP you may want to consider:

- the availability of male and female GPs and nurses
- if there are staff who speak languages other than English
- how the appointment system works
- what the opening hours are
- wheelchair and other access issues such as the availability of parking spaces.

The **NHS Inform** leaflet 'It's okay to ask' found on www.nhsinform.co.uk/rights/publications/leaflets gives advice about how to make best use of an appointment with your GP.

2.1 If you want to change your GP

If you want to change your GP you can. You do not have to tell your GP that you wish to change. Once a new GP has agreed to accept you, the new practice will contact your previous GP for your medical records.

2.2 Registering as a temporary resident

If you will be living away from home for up to three months, you can apply to be a **temporary resident** with a local GP.

If you become ill while staying away from home, approach the local GP practice to see if they are willing to treat you. If you are staying in a hotel, it may have an arrangement with a local practice.

3 Out of hours services and emergencies

If you need medical advice but your GP surgery is closed, **NHS 24** provides out of hours advice on **111** or at www.nhs24.com. In an emergency they can connect you to your local Accident and Emergency services or the Scottish Ambulance service.

4 Health Rights and Responsibilities Information leaflets

NHS Inform have produced a number of leaflets, and factsheets, explaining your rights and responsibilities when using the NHS and how certain areas of the health service work. These can be accessed at: www.nhsinform.co.uk/rights.

If you would like paper copies of these ring **Silver Line Scotland** on **0800 4 70 80 90** and they can be sent out to you.

5 NHS services to help you stay well

As you get older there are NHS services you can use to help you to stay well.

5.1 Prescriptions and managing your medicines

All prescriptions are free for everyone in Scotland. Most pharmacies will deliver your prescription to you if you have difficulty going to collect it.

If you find it difficult to take medication at the correct time, your pharmacist can make up a special pack called a blister pack with each dose for each time of day carefully marked. These are also helpful for carers who need to know that they are giving you correct doses. You could also buy a plastic box (called a dosette box) with times and the days of the week sectioned off so you can organise all your medication once a week.

5.2 Seasonal flu jab

You are entitled to be immunised against seasonal flu every year if you are 65 or over or are younger than 65 but have certain long term medical conditions. The immunisation programme generally runs from 1st October every year and you will need to contact your GP surgery to arrange an appointment to receive the vaccination.

There is more information about the flu jab at www.immunisationscotland.org.uk

5.3 Immunisation against pneumonia

You are entitled to be immunised against pneumonia if you are 65 or over or have certain medical conditions. This vaccine can be given at any time of year but may be offered at the same time as the seasonal flu jab. If you are concerned about having both vaccinations at the same time you should discuss this with the practice nurse or your GP.

5.4 General annual health check at 75

If you are over 75 and have not seen your GP in the previous year you will be invited to an appointment for a general health check.

5.5 Chiropody

If you have problems with your feet you can only receive free chiropody (also known as podiatry) if you are referred by your doctor or other health professional such as a health visitor or district nurse. Provision of chiropody services varies between council areas so it may be that you have to pay for the treatment you receive. Everyone is assessed on an individual basis. Whether or not you receive free treatment will depend on how serious your condition is and how quickly it needs to be treated. If you have diabetes you are likely to be given free treatment by a chiropodist.

Personal foot care (eg. Nail cutting) is not the responsibility of NHS Scotland Podiatry Services. In some areas local voluntary organisations offer toenail cutting services and some offer a home visit if you have difficulty getting to a clinic. There may be a small charge for this service. For more information about services available in your area call **NHS Inform** on **0800 22 44 88**.

5.6 Screening

The NHS in Scotland will offer you opportunities for health screening.

Breast cancer screening

Screening for breast cancer is a service offered to women aged 50 – 70. An appointment is made for screening every 3 years. Screening is available after the age of 70 on request.

Cervical cancer screening

Screening for cervical cancer is a service offered to all women in Scotland from the age of 20 – 60 every 3 years. After the age of 60 it is offered by invitation only, for example, if there have been problems in the past with an abnormal result. From April 2016, the age range for cervical screening will change from ages 20 – 60 years to ages 25 – 64 years.

Bowel cancer screening

Between the ages of 50 and 74 all men and women will receive a test kit in the post every 2 years.

If you are 75 or over you can still take a bowel screening test every two years if you want to. You will not be automatically sent a test kit though, so you will need to request one by calling the **Bowel Screening Centre Helpline** on **0800 0121 833**.

Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) testing

This screening will be offered to all men in Scotland in their 65th year. It involves an ultrasound scan of the abdomen.

If you are a man aged over 65 and you have never been for AAA screening, the contact details of your local AAA screening centre are available from your GP practice.

6 Other NHS services

6.1 NHS eye tests

A free NHS eye test is not just to test your sight – it also checks the health of your eyes and looks for signs of other health problems which could be spotted before they become more serious.

The NHS provide a free eye test every year if you are under 16 or over 60, and every two years if you are between 16 and 59. Eye tests can be more frequent if you have a family history of eye problems such as glaucoma or ocular hypertension. Most high street opticians provide NHS services.

You are likely to have to pay for frames and lenses but you do not have to buy them from the optician that examined your eyes. You can ask for your prescription and buy the frames and lenses from another optician.

For more information about problems with your vision you can contact the **Royal National Institute for the Blind** at their website www.nib.org.uk/scotland or on **0303 123 9999**.

You might be eligible for help with the cost of the glasses or contact lenses – see **Help with Health Costs** below.

6.2 Hearing tests

If you are concerned about your hearing, your GP can refer you for a free hearing test at an audiology department in a local NHS hospital or you could contact a private supplier.

An NHS hearing aid is free and if it is damaged can be repaired free of charge.

If you buy a hearing aid privately you cannot ask the NHS to repair it for you.

For more information about help with hearing problems and an online hearing test you can contact **Action on Hearing Loss** at www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk or call **0808 808 0123**.

6.3 Dental care from the NHS

Most dentists provide NHS treatment but some only offer private care. To find an NHS dentist you can visit www.nhs24.com/findlocal or by calling **NHS Inform** on **0800 22 44 88**. You are entitled to a free dental examination on the NHS usually every 6 months.

After a check-up, if you need treatment you will normally be given a treatment plan and be told how much it will cost. If you are an NHS patient the charges you have to pay have been set by the Scottish Government.

You may be eligible for help with the costs of your dental treatment see **Help with Health Costs** below.

7 Falls Risk Assessment or Prevention

If you have a fall or start to feel unsteady you should discuss this with your GP, even if you were not injured by a fall and generally feel fine. Your GP, or the local NHS community occupational therapists or physiotherapists, may offer to visit you to check if you are at risk of falling at home.

Once you have been assessed, you may be entitled to some aids and adaptations, for example, a bath rail or stair rail to reduce your risk of falling at home.

Search for 'Up and About' on the Health Scotland website (www.healthscotland.com) for useful advice about preventing falls.

8 NHS Services on discharge from hospital

Before you are discharged from hospital you should have an assessment of your care and support needs. This applies regardless of whether you are going home, to rehabilitation or to residential care. If you are likely to have ongoing health and social care needs when you leave hospital, the assessment may be carried out by a multidisciplinary team of health and social care professionals and may involve a financial assessment depending on the support you need and whether you are moving to live in a care home. You should not be discharged until you are deemed medically fit by a consultant and your care needs are in place.

9 NHS minor ailment service from your local pharmacy

The NHS minor ailment service enables pharmacists to provide free treatment for a range of minor illnesses and complaints to people who are registered with a GP in Scotland. The service is not available for people who live in care homes.

To use the service, you need to register at a community pharmacy and provide personal details such as your name, date of birth, gender and postcode. The pharmacist can then provide free treatment for minor ailments such as athlete's foot, back ache, cold sores, constipation, coughs, and diarrhea. No appointment is necessary. More information on the minor ailment service is available from **NHS Inform** on **0800 22 44 88**.

10 Travel abroad in Europe and free health care

You can apply for a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) to get free or reduced cost emergency health care in Europe. Once you have the card it lasts for 3-5 years and may save you a great deal of difficulty if you need emergency treatment. See www.ehic.org.uk or call **0845 606 2030**.

11 Help with Health Costs

Many NHS services are free, but there are also items such as glasses, wigs and travelling to hospital that you may need to pay for.

You may be entitled to help with your health costs if you are on a low income. People on some means-tested benefits and tax credits receive maximum help, and other people on a low income can apply for help through the NHS Low Income Scheme.

Call **Silver Line Scotland** on **0800 4 70 80 90** for more information about benefits and your entitlement.

11.1 NHS Low Income Scheme

You and your partner's income, and capital are taken into account in assessing whether you can get help. If you do qualify for help you will get a certificate called either:

- **HC2** – if you qualify for full help **OR**
- **HC3** – if you qualify for partial help

You can fill in a special short claim form, the **HC1(SC)** if you live permanently in a care home and the local authority helps you with the cost.

How to apply

You need to complete an **HC1** form which is available from Jobcentre Plus offices, hospitals or some GPs and Citizens Advice Bureaux or you can call **0845 850 1166** and ask for a claim form to be sent to you.

11.2 War Pensioners

You may be able to claim money back for dental treatment, hospital travel costs, glasses or contact lenses if the treatment you need is because of your pensionable disablement. For more information contact the **Veterans Agency** at www.veterans-uk.info or call **0800 169 2277**. The **Armed Services Advice Project** run by Citizens Advice Scotland can also provide information and advice. They can be contacted on **0808 800 1007** or at www.asapadvice.org.uk or by visiting your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

11.3 Refunds

Sometimes you may have to pay for your treatment before you have proof that you are entitled to help with costs. You can claim a refund on an HC5 form, but you have to claim within 3 months of paying the costs and you will need a receipt as proof of payment. HC5 forms are available from hospitals or Jobcentre Plus offices and in some dentists or opticians.

12 Travelling to appointments

12.1 Practical difficulties with travel

Most hospitals offer a non-emergency patient transport service to help if you cannot make your own travel arrangements. If you have a medical need or have limited mobility you can request transport to and from your healthcare appointment up to 28 days in advance by phoning the **Scottish Ambulance Service** on **0300 123 1236**. You can also ask your GP or carer to make the phone call on your behalf.

Transport may also be provided by volunteer drivers organised by an organisation like the **Royal Voluntary Service (RVS)**. Any driver who escorts you to hospital should have been carefully vetted by the organisation that they volunteer for. To find out about the availability of these services in your area you can look on the RVS website www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/get-help/services-we-provide/getting-out-and-about/community-transport or call **Silver Line Scotland** on **0800 4 70 80 90**.

12.2 Costs of travel

If you are eligible for help with travel costs, tell the hospital that you want to claim back the cost of your journey and show proof of your entitlement such as your HC2 certificate and receipts.

If you live in Highland, Argyll and Bute, Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland local authority areas and have to travel more than 30 miles (or more than 5 miles by water) to hospital you can claim repayment of travel expenses without a test of your income less the first £10.00 (for each appointment).

If you are entitled to help with health costs you will not have to pay the £10 as long as you have evidence that you are entitled to this help.

13 Complaints about NHS health services

Patient Advice and Support Service (PASS)

If you would like information about your rights and responsibilities as an NHS patient you can contact the **Patient Advice and Support Service (PASS)** through your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

The service provides information, advice and support for those wishing to give feedback or comments, raise concerns or make complaints about health care delivered by the NHS in Scotland. PASS also provides information and advice on how to access health and community services that offer additional support with health care needs. For more information visit www.patientadviceScotland.org.uk or contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

NHS Complaints

If you want to make a complaint about any part of the NHS there is a procedure you should follow, but if you think you have had a personal injury because of health treatment you should get legal advice before starting the complaints procedure. There is a useful feedback and complaints factsheet available at NHS Inform which is tailored to each Health Board. These can be found at www.nhsinform.co.uk/rights/publications/professionals/printfiles under the 'Feedback and Complaints' section or ring **Silver Line Scotland** on **0800 4 70 80 90** and ask for a copy to be sent to you.

Stage 1– “Local Resolution”

If you want to make a complaint about NHS treatment you have received or been refused, you should ask for a copy of the complaints procedure at the practice or hospital concerned.

For every complaint the first stage of the procedure is to complain to the person or organisation which provided the service to try to sort out the problem quickly and locally. A mediator may get involved to work with yourself, and the service provider with your permission, to help resolve the complaint. A hospital or GP practice will have someone who is responsible for dealing with complaints.

Stage 2– Referral to the Ombudsman

If your complaint is not resolved locally you can refer the matter to the **Scottish Public Services Ombudsman**.

Generally you have to send your complaint to the Ombudsman within a year of the incident you want to complain about. If there are special circumstances, the Ombudsman may be able to extend the time limit.

More information about how to use the Ombudsman service is available at www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/law-and-rights/civil-rights/complaints/how-to-use-an-ombudsman-or-commissioner-in-scotland-s or at your local Citizen’s Advice Bureau.

Final stage - Judicial review

If you are unhappy with the decision by the Ombudsman you may be able to apply to a court of law for a legal review called a judicial review. You will need a solicitor’s help to do this and you should get advice about the costs of this legal action.

14 Further Information

Silver Line Scotland

Silver Line Scotland provides information, friendship and advice to older people, their relatives and carers. The helpline is open 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

0800 4 70 80 90 (from a landline)

0300 4 70 80 90 (from a mobile)

You can also contact us by textphone on **0333 323 2451**.

If you need an interpreter call **0800 4 70 80 90** and simply state the language you need e.g. Hindi. Stay on the line for a few minutes and the Silver Line Scotland staff will do the rest.

Support our work

Every year, thousands of older people across Scotland benefit from the vital information and advice Age Scotland provides. If you would like to support this work and help improve the lives of older people in Scotland you can donate by:

- Giving us a call on 0333 323 2400 and ask for the fundraising team.
- Visit our website at www.agescotland.org.uk/donate.
- Complete the donation page overleaf and return in an envelope to Age Scotland, Causewayside House, 160 Causewayside, Edinburgh, EH9 1PR.

Across the UK

For information and advice in the rest of the UK:

In England contact Age UK Advice on **0800 169 65 65**
www.ageuk.org.uk

In Wales contact Age Cymru on **08000 223 444**
www.agecymru.org.uk

In Northern Ireland contact Age NI on **0808 808 7575**
www.ageni.org.uk

Notes

Would you like to support Age Scotland?

Support Age Scotland with a gift to enable us to continue producing fact sheets like this and support all our other vital work to help improve lives of older people in Scotland. Please complete the donation form below and return to:

Age Scotland
Freepost RSBS_KEHC-GBBC
160 Causewayside
Edinburgh
EH9 1PR

Alternatively, you can phone 0333 323 2400 or visit www.agescotland.org.uk.

Title:	Initials:	Surname:
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Address:
Postcode:

I would like to donate £.....

Cash/Cheque/Postal Order

I enclose a cheque/Postal Order made payable to: **Age Scotland**

Card Payment

I wish to donate by (please tick) MasterCard Visa CAF Maestro

Card Number: / /

Security Code: Issue Number: (Maestro Only)

Valid from: / Expiry Date: /

Please see overleaf for Gift Aid information.

Gift Aid Declaration

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Are you a UK Tax Payer?

If so, you can use Gift Aid to make your donations go further by ticking "Yes" below. If you Gift Aid your donation, the charity will continue to receive an additional 25p on every pound you give.

To qualify for Gift Aid, you must pay an amount of UK Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April one year to 5 April the next) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that Age Scotland will reclaim on your gifts for that tax year.

- Yes**, I want Age Scotland to treat all donations I have made for the four years prior to this year, and all donations I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise, as Gift Aid donations. I confirm I pay an amount of UK income tax and/or capital gains tax to cover the amount that all charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs will reclaim on my donations in the tax year.
- No**, I am not a UK taxpayer, and/or I do not wish to Gift Aid my donations.

Signature:

Date:

We may wish to contact you from time to time by either post or telephone, to provide you with information about our charity, services, or, to gather your opinion or views. On some occasions we may share your information with likeminded organisations. However, if you do not wish us to pass your details on, but are still happy to hear from us, please mark this box.

If you prefer not to hear from Age Scotland, please mark this

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No factsheet can ever be a complete guide to the law, which also changes from time to time. Legal advice should always be taken if you are in doubt.

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