

Health services

Understanding your rights to healthcare

Health & wellbeing



We are Age UK.

*Our network includes Age Cymru,
Age NI, Age Scotland, Age International
and more than 160 local partners.*

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Please seek medical advice for guidance regarding the seasonal flu jab. It is particularly important to seek such advice if you suffer from an ongoing medical condition that may be affected by having the flu jab.

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this guide is correct. However, things do change, so it is always a good idea to seek expert advice on your personal situation.

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Contents

Introduction	2
Your GP	4
What if I'm too ill to visit my GP?	6
What if I'm not registered with a GP or I'm away from home?	6
Deciding on treatment	7
Flu vaccinations	8
Getting a hearing check	8
Getting the most from your medicines	10
Visiting your pharmacist	12
NHS Direct	13
NHS Walk-in Centres	14
NHS Choices	14
Accident and emergency (A&E) departments and minor injuries units	15
Chiropodists	16
Continence advisers	17
Help to stop smoking	17
Opticians	20
You and your dentist	22
Paying for dental care	23
NHS screening programmes	24
Help with health costs	26
Getting involved in your local area	28
Complaining about the NHS	29
Useful organisations	30

Introduction

Regardless of age, very few people feel well all of the time. Fortunately, there are lots of ways you can get help when you're ill or when you need advice about your health.

For example, you can contact:

- your GP (family doctor)
- your local pharmacist
-  an NHS Walk-in Centre (not available in Scotland), or
- NHS Direct in England and Wales (this will become NHS 111 in England). In Scotland, contact NHS 24.

This guide aims to help you get the help you need if you feel ill. It tells you what NHS services are available and how to find them, as well as providing practical advice on the best ways to get the treatment you need.

There are going to be some changes in healthcare organisations in England from April 2013. The following organisations are mentioned in this guide and will be changing.

- Local PCTs – will be replaced by Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) led by local GPs and other clinical staff.
- PCT PALS – are being abolished. It's not yet been decided what will replace them.
- NHS Direct – will become NHS 111 in England (see page 35).
- LINKs – will be replaced with Local Healthwatch (see page 28).
- ICAS – independent advocacy services will be commissioned through local authorities.

Throughout this guide you will find suggestions for organisations that can offer further information and advice about your options. Their contact details can be found in the ‘Useful organisations’ section (see pages 30–38). Contact details for organisations near you can usually be found in your local phone book. If you have difficulty finding them, your local Age UK should be able to help (see page 30).

As far as possible, the information in this guide is applicable across the UK.

Key



This symbol indicates where information differs for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.



This symbol indicates who to contact for the next steps you need to take.

Your GP

Your family GP (general practitioner) is usually your first contact with the National Health Service (NHS). Talking to your GP is a good starting point if you, or the person you care for, has any health-related problems. Your GP can give you medical advice, treatment and can prescribe medication. GPs can also refer you to other community-based professionals or a specialist in a hospital.

Everyone should be registered with a GP practice. If you're not, you should join a practice as soon as possible, even if you don't currently have any health problems. This is important because you should have a GP close by who has access to your medical records, who is aware of your medical history and who can provide home visits. Don't wait until you're ill to register with a GP practice.

If you're joining a new practice, ask about services that may be important to you, such as:

- availability of male and female GPs and nurses
- staff who speak languages other than English
- how the appointment system works
- how far in advance you can book a non-urgent appointment
- wheelchair and other access issues.

Your GP should help you manage your own long-term health conditions yourself. You should also get support for any conditions, through regular monitoring of your health by a specialist nurse, for example.

i If you have difficulty finding a practice with space for new patients, contact your local primary care trust (if you live in England), local health board (in Wales), local NHS health board (in Scotland) or local health and social care trust (in Northern Ireland) – it's their responsibility to find a GP practice for you.

If you need to see your GP when the practice is not open, call as you usually would to book an appointment. Although you won't be able to speak directly to a person, a recorded message will tell you what you need to do to speak to a GP urgently.

i Everyone registered with a GP in England will soon get a 'summary care record' (SCR) if they want one. This will be created from your GP record and contain details of your medication, any bad reactions to medication, and any allergies. It could help out-of-hours doctors and A&E staff who can't access your GP records. You can opt out if you want to, and you will be asked permission every time someone wants to access it. Scotland already has a similar system known as emergency care summary. Wales is introducing an Individual Health Record.

what next?

If you live in England, contact NHS Direct (see page 35) for a list of practices in your local area, or visit NHS Choices (see page 35).

i If you live in Wales contact NHS Direct Wales (see page 35); in Scotland, contact NHS Inform (see page 36); and if you live in Northern Ireland, visit www.nidirect.gov.uk

What if I'm too ill to visit my GP?

If you or your partner are unable to visit your GP surgery for medical reasons, you can ask your GP to make a home visit. Your GP may be able to give you advice over the phone or will visit you if they think it's necessary. If possible, try to call your GP in the morning if you think you need a visit the same day.

What if I'm not registered with a GP or I'm away from home?

You should always be able to see a GP if you need urgent attention. If you're away from home or have not registered with a GP and you fall ill, you should contact the nearest surgery and ask them to see you. You can register with a GP surgery away from home as a temporary patient for up to three months. You'll still be able to remain registered as a patient with the GP where you normally live.

what next?

You could keep details of your medical condition(s), medication you are taking, contact details for your GP and other key health professionals in a free *LifeBook* produced by Age UK. *LifeBook* is an easy-to-use and safe method of recording the practical details of your life. Call 0845 685 1061 for a free copy.

Deciding on treatment

Health professionals will want to help you understand your illness better. You should always discuss your options with them to help you decide which treatment is right for you.

Ask about:

- any different ways to treat your condition
- what will happen if you don't undertake any treatment
- what treatment is recommended
- how effective the treatment is
- any side effects or risks
- how long treatment will be required
- how you will know if it's working
- anything you should avoid doing during treatment and afterwards
- anything you can do to help yourself.

what next?

If you live in England and you have a long-term medical condition, visit NHS Choices at www.nhs.uk/YourHealth for help managing it. You could also order a copy of *Help and advice for living life well with a long term condition* from the Department of Health's publications order line or download it from their website (see page 33). In Scotland, contact NHS Inform (see page 36). In Wales, contact NHS Direct Wales (see page 35).



Flu vaccinations

It's recommended you have an annual flu jab if you're 65 or over, live in a care home, or care for someone with a serious or ongoing health condition. It's also recommended if you have any of these problems: a chronic heart or chest complaint, including asthma; chronic kidney disease; diabetes; lowered immunity because of disease or treatment such as steroid medication or cancer treatment. Your jab will be free under any of these circumstances.

You should also be invited to have a one-off 'pneumo' jab once you reach 65 for protection against pneumonia.

what next?

Ask your GP for details of the practice's autumn flu vaccination programme.

Getting a hearing check

If you're concerned about your hearing, your GP can check to see whether there's a medical reason for your problem. If necessary, they can refer you for a hearing test at a local hospital. If you need a hearing aid, digital aids are available on the NHS and batteries are free.


what next?

Speak to your GP if you are concerned about your hearing. Action on Hearing Loss offers a free phone-based or online hearing check. Call 0844 800 3838 or visit their website (see page 31).

'I called NHS Direct to find out about painkillers for my mum. The information they gave me was very clear and we could act upon it immediately.'



Getting the most from your medicines

 You may be prescribed medicines to cure or to help manage your illness. Everyone aged 60 or over in England, and everyone in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, is eligible for free NHS prescriptions. In England, if you don't qualify for free prescriptions but take multiple medications, it can be worth buying a pre-payment certificate for either three or 12 months. For advice, or to order a certificate, call the order line on 0845 850 0030 or visit www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/1127.aspx. If you're undergoing treatment for cancer, you can apply for an exemption certificate that means all prescriptions are free. Contact Macmillan Cancer Support to find out more (see page 34).

If your GP suggests a new medicine for you, it's a good idea to find out more about why it's been prescribed, for example:

- What does it do?
- Why is it important to take it?
- When and how is it taken?
- How long will it need to be taken for?
- What should you be aware of when taking it? (e.g. can you take it with non-prescription medicines?)
- What should you do if you forget to take it?

Always read the Patient Information Leaflet (PIL) that comes with the medicine. You can listen to or request CD, Braille or large print versions of PILs from the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) Medicine Information Line on 0800 198 5000.

If your medicine seems to have unwanted side effects, discuss this with your GP. If you take four or more medicines, a six-monthly review of your medicines is recommended. If you start a new medicine to treat asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), high blood pressure or any blood-thinning medicines, you should be offered three consultations with a pharmacist over four weeks. This can help you get support in the early days of a new treatment, and make sure you're getting the most out of it.

**what
next?**

Speak to your pharmacist if the timing of your medicines causes problems or you have difficulty with the packaging.

***If your GP suggests
a new medicine for you,
it's a good idea to find
out more about why
it's been prescribed.***



Visiting your pharmacist

If you have a minor illness, think about talking to your pharmacist first. Your pharmacist can help you to determine whether you need to see a GP. They should be able to advise on problems such as:

- aches and pains
- allergies
- eye infections
- stomach problems
- skin conditions
- women's health issues
- common drugs.

You can talk to your pharmacist in confidence and don't need to make an appointment. Many pharmacies now have a private consultation area where you can talk without being overheard.

Your local pharmacist may also be able to carry out a Medicines Use Review (MUR) to help you manage what you are taking and answer any questions.

In England, order a copy of the Department of Health's leaflet *Medicines use review: Understand your medicines* or download it from their website (see page 33). In Wales,



contact NHS Direct Wales (see page 35) for information on MURs.

Pharmacists often offer other services, such as a blood pressure check and stop smoking services.

i If you live in Scotland, you may be able to get free treatment from your pharmacist under the minor ailments service if you meet certain conditions. Contact NHS Inform for more information (see page 36).

If you have difficulty getting to the pharmacy and have a repeat prescription, you may be able to arrange for your medicines to be delivered to your home. Ask your pharmacist about this service.

what next?

Find a pharmacy close to you where you can seek advice when you need to, and keep its phone number handy in case you need to call them.

NHS Direct

If you feel ill and would like to talk to a nurse, or you want some health information, contact NHS Direct. NHS Direct is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week in England and Wales. It has information about local health services, such as dentists and GPs, and details of late-opening pharmacies. If English is not your preferred language, ask to use NHS Direct's confidential translation service. There is a textphone service for anyone who is deaf or hard of hearing.

NHS 111 is a new service being gradually introduced across England to make it easier to access the most appropriate NHS service. It will eventually replace NHS Direct by October 2013. It's free to call, and you can ring for advice if you have urgent but not life-threatening symptoms.

what next?

Keep the NHS Direct number to hand. If you live in England or Wales, call 0845 4647. In Scotland, if your GP surgery is closed then call NHS 24 on 08454 24 24 24. Visit the

i NHS Direct or NHS Direct Wales website if you want to use the online symptom checker or self-help guide.

NHS Walk-in Centres

NHS Walk-in Centres have opened in some towns and cities in England. They're for people who have minor injuries and illnesses and can also offer health information and advice. The centres are run by NHS nurses, have long opening hours and you don't need to make an appointment.

what next?

To find out if there's an NHS Walk-in Centre in your area, contact NHS Direct (see page 35).

NHS Choices

In England, the NHS Choices website can give you information to help you make choices about your health, from finding local services to making decisions about your lifestyle. You can find services near you such as dentists, opticians, A&E departments, hospices and long-term illness support services.

what next?

Visit the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk. In Scotland, visit NHS Inform (see page 36). In Wales, visit the NHS Direct Wales website at www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk. You can also add feedback on your experience of healthcare or read other people's at NHS Choices or www.patientopinion.org.uk



Accident and emergency (A&E) departments and minor injuries units

The priority of accident and emergency (A&E) departments is to treat serious, life-threatening cases. It is often obvious when emergency treatment is needed – for example:

- loss of consciousness
- persistent chest pain (15 minutes or longer)
- difficulty breathing
- heavy loss of blood
- suspected broken bones.

It's also important to be aware of symptoms that may indicate a stroke.

Remember the **FAST** test:

Facial weakness – can they smile? Has their mouth or eye drooped?

Arm weakness – can they raise both arms?

Speech problems – can they speak clearly and understand what you say?

Time to call 999, if you see any single one of these signs.

For less serious injuries, such as sprains, cuts and grazes, there are an increasing number of minor injuries units or NHS Walk-in Centres (see page 14). In England and Wales, call NHS Direct for advice and to see whether there's a unit nearby (see page 35). In Scotland, contact NHS Inform (see page 36). In Northern Ireland, call the Health and Social Care Business Services Organisation on 028 9032 4431 for details of the nearest unit.



Chiropodists

If your feet become painful, swollen or red, you should discuss this with your GP. If you need and qualify for NHS treatment, your GP will be able to refer you on. If you're not eligible for NHS treatment, your GP may suggest you visit a local Health Professions Council (HPC) registered chiropodist doing private work.

what next?

Visit the Feet for Life website at www.feetforlife.org to search for a registered chiropodist and for more foot care information. If you have problems cutting your toenails because they are hard to reach, ask your local Age UK if they offer a nail-cutting service.

Continence advisers

If you have a bladder or bowel weakness, you don't have to put up with it. There are many different reasons why bladder or bowel weakness happens and there are often treatments to help you manage or cure the problem, particularly if it is diagnosed early.

what next?

See our free guide *Managing incontinence* for more information. Speak to your GP, district nurse or local NHS continence adviser. You could also contact the Bladder and Bowel Foundation (see page 32).

Help to stop smoking

If you are thinking about stopping smoking, your GP practice may offer support on a one-to-one or group basis. There are different types of support and medication available to help you give up smoking.

what next?



Ask your GP for details of local smoking cessation services or call the NHS Free Smoking Helpline (see page 36). In Wales, call Stop Smoking Wales; in Scotland, call Smokeline; and in Northern Ireland call the Smokers' Helpline (see page 36).

‘Generally I’ve been pretty healthy but I did mention that both of my parents had high blood pressure.’



Anne, 67, changed her GP when she moved house last year.

‘I registered with my current GP practice when I first moved into the area. I was offered a new patient health check with the practice nurse. She told me about some of the services I can get, like a flu jab in autumn.

‘She also asked a lot of questions about how my health had been in the past.

‘Generally I’ve been pretty healthy but I did mention that both of my parents had high blood pressure.

‘The nurse took my blood pressure and it was a bit high so she asked me to come back the next week to have it checked again. As it was still raised when I went back she told me to make an appointment with the GP, who prescribed some medication.

‘I joined a local walking group to help lose a bit of weight and between that and the medication my blood pressure has gone down to a level the nurse is happy with. I see the nurse for a check-up every six months but so far I haven’t had any further problems.’



Opticians



You can get a free NHS sight test when you reach 60 (in Scotland, everyone is eligible for one, regardless of age). They check not just your sight, but also your eye health. It's recommended that you have a sight test every two years or as often as your optician advises. Ask whether your eye test includes checks for conditions that are more common in people in later life, such as glaucoma.

If you have an illness or disability that means you can't leave home on your own, you can get an NHS eye test at home and shouldn't have to pay any extra costs for it. Contact your PCT PALs (see page 37) for help finding opticians that offer home visits.

If you need glasses, you do not have to buy them from the optician who tests your eyes. You can take your prescription to another optician who offers a wider selection or cheaper range of glasses. If you receive certain benefits or are on a low income, you may be entitled to help with the cost. See the 'Help with health costs' section, page 26.

If you're unhappy with the service you receive from your optician and can't resolve your complaint with them directly, you can contact the Optical Consumer Complaints Service (see page 37).

what next?

See our free guide *Caring for your eyes* for more information. Contact RNIB for more information and advice about sight loss (see page 37). If you have both sight and hearing loss, contact Sense (see page 38).

'I used to put off getting my eyes checked because I was worried about the cost of new glasses. It was a relief to find out I was eligible for help with the cost.'




You and your dentist


As well as regular brushing, to keep your teeth and gums healthy you should also visit your dentist regularly.

All necessary treatment, including keeping your mouth, teeth and gums healthy, is available on the NHS. Dentures are also available on the NHS. If you want to have cosmetic treatments, such as tooth-whitening or large white fillings, these are not covered under NHS treatment and private charges will apply.


If you need emergency treatment and have a regular NHS dentist, contact them for advice. If you call out of hours, your dentist should have an answerphone message explaining how to access treatment. If you're not a regular patient at a dentist and need emergency treatment, contact

-  NHS Direct to find out where to go. (In Scotland, contact NHS 24 – see page 35.)

If you can't leave the house to visit the dentist because of poor health or a disability, call your nearest PALS

-  (Patient Advice and Liaison Service, see page 37) to find out what your options are in England. In Scotland, contact NHS 24 for advice (see page 35). In Wales, contact your local Community Health Council (see page 33).

what next?

-  For a list of local dentists in England, contact NHS Direct (see page 35) or visit NHS Choices (see page 35); in Wales, contact NHS Direct Wales (see page 35); in Northern Ireland, visit www.healthandcareni.co.uk, and in Scotland, contact NHS Inform on 0800 22 44 88 (see page 36).

- i** If you cannot find a dentist accepting new NHS patients in your local area, contact your local primary care trust (in England), local health board (in Wales), local NHS health board (in Scotland) or local health and social care trust (in Northern Ireland). It is their responsibility to make sure you have access to emergency treatment.

Paying for dental care

Always check whether your dentist is offering NHS or private treatment – NHS treatment is usually cheaper than private dental treatment.

Dental treatment from the NHS is not free for everyone, so ask about the cost before treatment. If you're not entitled to free treatment or some help towards health charges through the NHS Low Income Scheme (see page 36), you will have to pay one of three charges according to the type of treatment you need.

- i** To get an idea of current NHS dental charges in England, see NHS leaflet HC12, *A quick guide to help with health costs including charges and optical voucher values*. You can pick up a copy from your local Jobcentre Plus office, order a copy from the NHS on 0845 610 1112 or download it from www.nhs.uk/healthcosts. In Scotland, see the NHS Scotland leaflet *A quick guide to health costs*. You can pick it up from your GP surgery, pharmacist, optician or dentist, or download it from www.scotland.gov.uk/healthcosts. In Wales, contact NHS Direct Wales (see page 35).


what next?

- See our free factsheet *Dental care: NHS and private treatment* for more information. In Wales see Age Cymru's free factsheet *Dental care: NHS and private treatment in Wales*.
- i** For free, impartial dental advice, contact the British Dental Health Foundation (see page 32).


NHS screening programmes

Women between the ages of 50 and 70 are invited every three years to take part in the NHS breast screening programme. They are not invited once they reach 70 but have the right to be screened every three years on request. In England, the NHS is extending the age range so that by the end of 2012, all women aged 47 to 73 will be invited for screening.

Between the ages of 50 and 64 women registered with a GP are invited every five years for cervical cancer screening through the NHS call and recall system in England and

-  Northern Ireland. Make sure that your GP practice has your current address. In Scotland, cervical screening is offered every three years from age 20 to 60, and in Wales, women are called for a test every three years from age 20 to 64.

You should be invited for bowel cancer screening every two years if you are aged between 60 and 69 and live in England

-  or Northern Ireland. If you are over 70 you can ask for a screening kit every two years. In Scotland, you will be invited for screening if you are aged between 50 and 74; in Wales, you will be invited if you're between 60 and 74.

- i** From June 2012, men aged 65 and over in Scotland will be invited for abdominal aortic aneurysm screening. This aims to reduce the number of deaths related to this condition. Men only need one ultrasound scan to find out if they're at risk. This screening is gradually being introduced in England.

**what
next?**

NHS Direct has details of local breast cancer screening centres. If you're under 64 and it's more than five years since your last cervical screening, ask your GP practice or NHS Direct who you should contact. For further information about screening programmes in England go to www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk; for Wales go to

- i** www.screeningservices.org.uk; for Scotland go to www.healthscotland.com/screening.aspx and for Northern Ireland go to www.cancerscreening.hscni.net

Women between the ages of 50 and 70 are invited every three years to take part in the NHS breast screening programme.



Help with health costs

If you or your partner receives certain means-tested benefits, you are entitled to:

- free NHS prescriptions
- free NHS dental treatment
- an NHS eye test every two years (or as recommended by your optician)
- vouchers towards the cost of glasses or contact lenses
- free NHS wigs and fabric supports
- help with necessary travel costs to receive NHS treatment if you're referred by a doctor or dentist or need to see a consultant. In Wales, you can only get help with travel costs for NHS treatment under the care of a consultant.



You'll qualify for all of the above if you or your partner receive:

- the Guarantee Credit part of Pension Credit
- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Working Tax Credit or Child Tax Credit (in some circumstances).

If you don't receive any of these benefits but have a low income, and less than £16,000 in savings (£23,500 if you live in a care home), you may still be entitled to some help with health costs through the NHS Low Income Scheme.

If you receive any of these benefits, take your award notice with you next time you go to the NHS for one of the items listed above. You can pick up application form HC1 at your dentist, optician or GP practice if you think you may be eligible for help through the NHS Low Income Scheme. Try to fill this in before you need treatment.

what next?

For more information about the NHS Low Income Scheme, call its helpline (see page 36) or read our factsheet *Help with health costs*. In Wales read Age Cymru's free factsheet *Help with health costs in Wales*.



Getting involved in your local area

If you want to be able to influence the health and social care services in your local area in England, you could join a Local Involvement Network (LINK). If you join a LINK, you can:

- address or raise issues you think are important in your local area
- influence people who make decisions about current and/or future services
- help services provide better care.

LINKs will be replaced by Local HealthWatch by April 2013. Pilot schemes are currently running in some areas. They will have a broader remit than LINKs.

what next?

To find out about LINKs in your area, contact the local council social services department, which should be able to provide more information or visit www.nhs.uk/links

Complaining about the NHS

If you are not happy with the treatment you have received, or have been refused treatment on the NHS, you can make a complaint. Often it's best to try to sort it out informally if you can, by talking to the staff at the service involved. But if you don't want to do this or it doesn't help, you can use the NHS complaints procedure. If you need to, ask your NHS service provider for a copy of its complaints procedure.

There are different ways to get help with making a complaint, depending on where you live.

- In England, contact your nearest PALS for advice. ICAS (Independent Complaints Advocacy Service) can support you when making a formal complaint in England (see page 34). See our free factsheet *Resolving problems and making a complaint about NHS care* for more information.
-  In Wales, your local Community Health Council (see page 33) will have a Complaints Advocacy Service that can help you make a formal complaint. See Age Cymru's free factsheet *Resolving problems and making a complaint about NHS care in Wales*.
- In Northern Ireland, contact the Patient Client Council for free, confidential help and advice. Call them on 0800 917 0222 or visit www.patientclientcouncil.hscni.net
- In Scotland, contact the Patients Advice and Support service (PASS) through Citizens Advice Scotland. Contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau or call 0800 800 0121. Visit www.cas.org.uk/PatientAdvice to find out more.

Useful organisations

Age UK

We provide advice and information for people in later life through our Age UK Advice line, publications and online.

Age UK Advice: 0800 169 65 65

Lines are open seven days a week from 8am to 7pm.

www.ageuk.org.uk

Call Age UK Advice to find out whether there is a local Age UK near you, and to order free copies of our information guides and factsheets.

In Wales, contact

Age Cymru: 0800 169 65 65

www.agecymru.org.uk

In Northern Ireland, contact

Age NI: 0808 808 7575

www.ageni.org

In Scotland, contact

Age Scotland: 0845 125 9732

www.agescotland.org.uk

Action on Hearing Loss (formerly RNID)

Provides advice and support for people who are deaf or hard of hearing through an information line, tinnitus helpline and range of factsheets.

19–23 Featherstone Street
London EC1Y 8SL

Tel: 0808 808 0123

Textphone: 0808 808 9000

Email: informationline@hearingloss.org.uk

www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

Alzheimer's Society

Offers advice, information and support to people with dementia, their families and carers through its helpline and local branches.

Devon House
58 St Katharine's Way
London E1W 1LB

Tel: 0845 300 0336

Email: enquiries@alzheimers.org.uk

www.alzheimers.org.uk

In Scotland, contact **Alzheimer Scotland**

Tel: 0808 808 3000 www.alzscot.org

Arthritis Care

Has local branches around the country, runs a helpline for people living with arthritis and produces a range of useful leaflets and factsheets.

18 Stephenson Way
London NW1 2HD

Tel: 0808 800 4050
Email: info@arthritiscare.org.uk
www.arthritiscare.org.uk

Bladder and Bowel Foundation

The UK's largest advocacy charity, providing information and support for people living with bladder and bowel control problems.

SATRA Innovation Park
Rockingham Road
Kettering
Northants NN16 9JH

Tel: 0845 345 0165
Email: info@bladderandbowelfoundation.org
www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org

British Dental Health Foundation

Independent charity aimed at improving oral health.

Tel: 0845 063 1188
www.dentalhealth.org.uk

Community Health Councils in Wales

Statutory and independent voice for health services in Wales.
Can advise on available health services in your area.

Tel: 0845 644 7814

Email: enquiries@waleschc.org.uk

www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/899/home

Department of Health

Government department with responsibility for public health, the NHS and social care in England.

Tel: 020 7210 4850

Orderline: 0300 123 1002

www.dh.gov.uk

Health In My Language

Provides translated information about health and NHS services in Scotland.

www.healthinmylanguage.com

Health and Care Professions Council

Regulates a range of health professionals working for the NHS and those you may see privately, including chiropractors, dietitians, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech and language therapists.

Park House

184 Kennington Park Road

London SE11 4BU

Tel: 0845 300 6184/020 7820 9684

www.hpc-uk.org

ICAS (Independent Complaints Advocacy Service)

Provides advocacy support if you wish to make a complaint about the NHS in England. There are different providers for different areas of the UK:

In the West Midlands, London and the east of England, contact **POhWER**

Tel: 0300 456 2370

www.pohwer.net/how_we_can_help/independent.html

In the south-east and south-west of England, contact **SEAP**. Visit the website to find the number for your local office.

www.seap.org.uk/icas

In the north-east, north-west, East Midlands and Yorkshire & Humberside regions of England, contact **The Carers Federation**. Visit the website to find the number for your local office.

www.carersfederation.co.uk/icas

Macmillan Cancer Support

Provides information, advice and support for people with cancer and their families.

89 Albert Embankment
London SE1 7UQ

Tel: 0808 808 00 00

www.macmillan.org.uk

NHS Choices

Website that enables you to find out about local NHS services and also provides information to help you choose which hospital to go to for treatment.

www.nhs.uk

In Wales visit www.wales.nhs.uk

NHS Direct

A 24-hour telephone service staffed by nurses who can offer advice on the most appropriate action to take if you are feeling unwell.

Tel: 0845 4647

Textphone: 0845 606 4647

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

NHS Direct Wales

Free health advice and information service available 24 hours a day for information on any health-related matters or concerns.

Tel: 0845 4647

www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

In Scotland, if your doctor's surgery is closed then contact NHS 24 on 08454 24 24 24 or visit www.nhs24.com.

In Northern Ireland, visit www.nidirect.gov.uk

NHS Free Smoking Helpline

For information on stopping smoking and details of support.

Tel: 0800 022 4332

www.smokefree.nhs.uk

In Wales, call Stop Smoking Wales on 0800 085 2219
or visit www.stopsmokingwales.com.

In Scotland, call Smokeline on 0800 84 84 84.

In Northern Ireland, call the Smokers' Helpline
on 0800 85 85 85.

NHS Inform

Health information and advice for people in Scotland.

Tel: 0800 22 44 88

www.nhsinform.co.uk

NHS Low Income Scheme

Provides full or partial help with health costs if you have
a low income.

Tel: 0845 850 1166 (England, Scotland and Wales);

0800 587 8982 (Northern Ireland)

Optical Consumer Complaints Service

Independent mediation service that can help with complaints about opticians.

OCCS

PO Box 219

Petersfield GU32 9BY

Tel: 0844 800 5071

Email: postbox@opticalcomplaints.co.uk

www.opticalcomplaints.co.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Provides information, advice and support to users of health services in England. To find your nearest PALS, contact NHS Direct on 0845 4647 or visit www.pals.nhs.uk.

Patient and Client Council

Provides information, advice and support to users of health services in Northern Ireland.

Tel: 0800 917 0222

Email: info.pcc@hscni.net

www.patientclientcouncil.hscni.net

RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People)

Provides a range of services, advice and information, including leaflets and publications, many of which are available in large print, audio CD or tape and Braille. It can also give details of local sight loss support organisations.

105 Judd Street

London WC1H 9NE

Tel: 0303 123 9999

Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk

www.rnib.org.uk

Sense

Supports and campaigns for people who are deafblind.

101 Pentonville Road
London N1 9LG

Tel: 0845 127 0060
Textphone: 0845 127 0066
Email: info@sense.org.uk
www.sense.org.uk

Stroke Association

Provides community support in some areas and patient leaflets for people affected by stroke.

Stroke Association House
240 City Road
London EC1V 2PR

Tel: 0303 3033 100
Email: info@stroke.org.uk
www.stroke.org.uk

Can you help Age UK?

Please complete the donation form below with a gift of whatever you can afford and return to: RSXZ-KTTS-KSHT, Age UK, Tavis House, 1-6 Tavistock Square, LONDON WC1H 9NA. Alternatively, you can phone 0800 169 87 87 or visit www.ageuk.org.uk/donate. If you prefer, you can donate directly to one of our national or local partners. Thank you.

Personal details

Title:	Initials:	Surname:
Address:		
Postcode:		
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 Maestro American Express

(Maestro only)

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Expiry date	<input type="text"/>	/	<input type="text"/>	Issue no. (Maestro only)	<input type="text"/>	

Gift aid declaration

(please tick) Yes, I want Age UK and its partner organisations* 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 income tax and/or capital gains tax at least equal to the tax that the charity will reclaim on my donations in the tax year. Date: ___/___/___ (please complete). *Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age NI



We will use the information you have supplied to communicate with you according to data protection guidelines. Age UK (registered charity number 1128267) comprises the charity, its group of companies and national partners (Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age NI). If you would prefer not to hear from them or carefully selected third parties, let us know by phoning 0800 107 8977.

You may be interested in other guides in this range

- Bereavement
- Caring for your eyes
- Going into hospital
- Going solo
- Healthy eating
- Healthy living
- Managing incontinence
- Staying cool in a heatwave
- Staying steady
- Winter wrapped up



To order any of our **free** publications, please call Age UK Advice free on:

0800 169 65 65

www.ageuk.org.uk/healthandwellbeing

What should I do now?

For more information on the issues covered in this guide, or to order any of our publications, please call Age UK Advice free on **0800 169 65 65** or visit www.ageuk.org.uk/healthandwellbeing

Our publications are also available in large print and audio formats.

The following Age UK information guides may be useful:

- *Going solo*
- *Healthy living*
- *Staying steady*

The Age UK Group offers a wide range of products and services specially designed for people in later life. For more information, please call **0800 169 18 19**.

If contact details for your local Age UK are not in the box below, call Age UK Advice free on **0800 169 65 65**.

