

Help with health costs

Can you get help with the cost of:



Prescriptions



Dental treatment



Sight tests



Glasses or contact lenses



Wigs or fabric supports from a hospital



Travel to hospital for NHS treatment?



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HC11 – Help with health costs

Introduction

This booklet gives guidance about NHS charging arrangements in England, Scotland and Wales.

The National Health Service (NHS) is, first and foremost, for the benefit of people resident in the United Kingdom (UK). If a person is accepted for NHS treatment, eligibility for exemption from charges for NHS treatment is based on the conditions described in this booklet, not on nationality, the payment of UK taxes nor the payment of UK National Insurance contributions. Any patient ordinarily resident in the UK may look to the NHS for treatment and not be liable for charges except where legislation specifically permits, and requires, a charge to be made – for example, for prescription charges.

Most NHS treatment is free, although there can be charges for some things. This booklet sets out information about who does not have to pay charges and also tells you about the help you might get with the cost of the following if you are on a low income:

- NHS prescriptions
- NHS dental treatment
- Sight tests
- Glasses and contact lenses

- Necessary costs of travel to receive NHS treatment under the care of a consultant
- NHS wigs and fabric supports (whenever we say ‘fabric supports’ we mean spinal or abdominal supports or surgical brassieres supplied through a hospital).

NOTE: Whenever we refer to a Primary Care Trust (PCT), we also mean an NHS Board in Scotland, or a Local Health Board (LHB) in Wales unless we say otherwise. In Scotland, ‘Practitioner Services’ means Practitioner Services of the Common Services Agency in Scotland.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

You can quickly check if you are entitled to free treatment by going to the Quick check guides which start on page 8.

For more detailed guidance you need to go to the Contents list starting on page 5 and find the group you most easily fit into, then go to the page number shown (for example, if you are 60 or over, go to page 17).

After reading about the group that most applies to you, **check** to see if any others also apply (you may fit into more than one group).

For instance, you might be:

- 60 or over and also have a low income
- pregnant and also have a low income.

If this applies to you, you need to make sure you read about both groups.

When you have found the group, or groups, you belong to and what help you can get, go on to page 42. This tells you how to get help with NHS costs when you go for treatment.

REFUNDS There is also information about refunds in this booklet – read pages 49–55.

PENALTY CHARGES If you are found to have made a wrongful claim for help with health costs, you will face penalty charges and may be prosecuted under powers introduced by the Health Act 1999 – read page 48.

CURRENT RATES The current rates of NHS charges and optical voucher values in England and Scotland are listed in the separate leaflet HC12. Look at leaflet HC12W if you are getting treatment in Wales.

Go to page 76 to find out how to get these leaflets.

THIS LEAFLET GIVES GENERAL GUIDANCE ONLY AND SHOULD NOT BE TREATED AS A COMPLETE AND AUTHORITATIVE STATEMENT OF LAW.

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NHS PRESCRIPTIONS

You can get free NHS prescriptions if at the time the prescription is dispensed you:

- are aged 60 or over
- are under 16
- are aged 16, 17 or 18 in full-time education
- are pregnant, or have had a baby in the previous 12 months and have a valid exemption certificate
- have a listed medical condition and have a valid exemption certificate
- have a continuing physical disability which means you cannot go out without help from another person and have a valid exemption certificate
- are an NHS in-patient
- are getting, or your partner gets:
 - Income Support
 - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (Incapacity Benefit or Disability Living Allowance do not count, as they are not income-related)
 - Pension Credit Guarantee Credit
- are entitled to, or named on, a valid NHS tax credit exemption certificate
- are named on a valid HC2 certificate
- are a war pensioner, the prescription is for your accepted disablement and you have a valid war pension exemption certificate.

Supplied free:

- medication administered at a hospital or an NHS Walk in Centre
- prescribed contraceptives
- medication personally administered by a GP
- medication supplied at a hospital or PCT clinic for the treatment of a sexually transmissible infection (STI).

WALES – FREE NHS PRESCRIPTIONS

In addition to the above, you get free NHS prescriptions if you are aged under 25 and your prescription is dispensed in Wales.

NHS DENTAL TREATMENT

You can get free NHS dental treatment if:

- **when the treatment starts you are:**
 - aged under 18
 - aged 18 in full-time education
 - pregnant, or have borne a child in the 12 months before treatment starts
 - an NHS in-patient and the treatment is carried out by the hospital dentist
 - an NHS Hospital Dental Service out-patient*
 - a Community Dental Service patient.*

* *There may be a charge for dentures and bridges.*

- **when the treatment starts or when the charge is made:**

- you are getting, or your partner gets:
 - Income Support
 - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (Incapacity Benefit or Disability Living Allowance do not count as they are not income-related)
 - Pension Credit Guarantee Credit
- you are entitled to, or named on, a valid NHS tax credit exemption certificate
- you are named on a valid HC2 certificate.

Partial help: if you are named on a valid HC3 certificate you might get some help towards the cost of your NHS dental treatment.

War pensioners – read page 28.

WALES – FREE NHS DENTAL EXAMINATION

In addition to the above, you get free NHS dental examinations in Wales if you are aged under 25, or 60 or over, on the day you are examined.

NHS SIGHT TESTS

You can get free sights tests if you:

- are under 16
- are aged 16,17 or 18 in full-time education
- are aged 60 or over
- are a diagnosed glaucoma patient
- have been advised by an ophthalmologist that you are at risk of glaucoma
- are aged 40 or over and are a parent, brother, sister, son or daughter of a diagnosed glaucoma patient
- have been diagnosed as diabetic
- are registered as severely sight-impaired/blind or sight-impaired/partially sighted
- need complex lenses
- are someone whose sight test is carried out through the hospital eye department as part of the management of your eye condition
- are getting, or your partner gets:
 - Income Support
 - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (Incapacity Benefit or Disability Living Allowance do not count as they are not income-related)
 - Pension Credit Guarantee Credit
- are entitled to, or named on, a valid NHS tax credit exemption certificate
- are named on a valid HC2 certificate.

continued

Partial help: if you are named on a valid HC3 certificate you might get some help towards the cost of a private sight test.

War pensioners – read page 28.

NHS OPTICAL VOUCHERS

You can get vouchers towards the costs of glasses or contact lenses if you:

- are under 16
- are aged 16, 17 or 18 in full-time education
- need complex lenses – read page 35
- are getting, or your partner gets:
 - Income Support
 - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (Incapacity Benefit or Disability Living Allowance do not count as they are not income-related)
 - Pension Credit Guarantee Credit
- are entitled to, or named on, a valid NHS tax credit exemption certificate
- are named on a valid HC2 certificate.

Partial help: if you are named on a valid HC3 certificate, you might get some help.

NOTE: If your glasses or contact lenses cost more than your voucher value, you will have to pay the difference.

War pensioners – read page 28.

NHS VOUCHERS FOR REPAIR OR REPLACEMENT OF GLASSES OR CONTACT LENSES

You can get vouchers if you:

- are under 16 (if you are 16 or over, conditions apply – read pages 35–36).

NHS TRAVEL COSTS

You can get help with necessary cost of travel to receive NHS treatment under the care of a consultant if you:

- are a war pensioner and the treatment is for your accepted disablement
- are getting, or your partner gets (and includes travel by your dependent children):
 - Income Support
 - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (Incapacity Benefit or Disability Living Allowance do not count as they are not income-related)
 - Pension Credit Guarantee Credit
- are entitled to, or named on, a valid NHS tax credit exemption certificate
- are named on a valid HC2 certificate.

Children under 16 and young people 16 and over – read pages 39–40.

Partial help: if you are named on a valid HC3 certificate you might get some help.

NHS WIGS AND FABRIC SUPPORTS

You can get free wigs and fabric supports if you:

- are under 16
- are aged 16, 17 or 18 in full-time education
- are a hospital in-patient
- are a war pensioner and the wig or fabric support is for your accepted disablement and you have a valid war pension exemption certificate
- are getting or your partner gets:
 - Income Support
 - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (Incapacity Benefit or Disability Living Allowance don't count as they are not income-related.)
 - Pension Credit Guarantee Credit
- are entitled to, or named on, a valid NHS tax credit exemption certificate
- are named on a valid HC2 certificate.

Partial help: if you are named on a valid HC3 certificate you might get some help.

Age groups

CHILDREN UNDER 16 AND YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 16, 17 AND 18 IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION (England and Scotland)

Full-time education means you must be receiving full-time instruction from a recognised educational establishment, such as a school, college or university. To be a 'recognised establishment' the place where you are studying must have a Department of Education and Skills (DfES) Establishment Number, and be registered on the DfES database. If it is not registered with the DfES, you still may be able to claim for help with health costs under the NHS Low Income Scheme – read pages 24–27.

You get free:

- NHS prescriptions
- NHS dental treatment for any course of treatment that starts before your 19th birthday
- NHS sight tests
- NHS wigs and fabric supports.

You also get:

- vouchers towards the cost of glasses or contact lenses
- if you have lost or damaged your glasses or contact lenses – read pages 35–36
- if you need help with travel costs to and from hospital for NHS treatment – read pages 39–40.

OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION (England and Scotland)

You get free:

- NHS dental treatment for any course of treatment which starts before your 18th birthday
- if you need help with travel costs to and from the hospital for NHS treatment – read pages 39–40
- if you are aged 16 or 17 and are supported by a Local Authority because you have recently left Local Authority care – read page 37
- if you don't have much money to pay other health costs, you can still claim for help – read pages 24–27.

YOUNG PEOPLE AGED UNDER 25 LIVING IN WALES

You get free NHS prescriptions dispensed in Wales, and NHS dental examinations carried out in Wales, before your 25th birthday.

PEOPLE AGED 60 OR OVER IN ENGLAND, SCOTLAND AND WALES

You get free:

- NHS prescriptions
- NHS sight tests.

If you need help with other health costs, check to see if you fit into any of the groups listed on pages 5–7.

PEOPLE AGED 60 OR OVER IN WALES

You also get free NHS dental examinations carried out in Wales.

Income groups

PEOPLE GETTING BENEFITS OR TAX CREDITS

Either you or your partner may be getting the benefit or credit.

If you are waiting for your claim to be settled and need help urgently with any health costs – read pages 24–27.

INCOME SUPPORT (IS)

You and your partner get free:

- NHS prescriptions
- NHS dental treatment
- NHS sight tests
- NHS wigs and fabric supports.

You also get:

- a voucher towards the cost of glasses or contact lenses
- refunds of necessary travel costs to receive NHS treatment under the care of a consultant for you, your partner and any dependent children and young people under 19.

PENSION CREDIT GUARANTEE CREDIT

If you get:

- Pension Credit Guarantee Credit
- Pension Credit Guarantee Credit with Savings Credit, or
- If you are aged under 60 and your partner gets either of the above, you are entitled to the same help with health costs as people getting Income Support – see above.

IMPORTANT: If you only get Pension Credit **Savings** Credit on its own, this does not entitle you to help with health costs. If you have to pay health costs, check to see if you are in any of the other groups listed on pages 5–7. You might be able to get help if you are on a low income – read pages 24–27.

How to check if you are getting Pension Credit Guarantee Credit

Your payment book (if you have one) is simply marked 'Pension Credit'. Only your award notice tells you what type of Pension Credit you get. This is shown at item 5 on the page entitled 'How your Pension Credit has been worked out'. If you have not received an award notice, or have mislaid it, you should ring the Pension Service on freephone 0800 99 1234 and ask for a copy.

INCOME-BASED JOB SEEKER'S ALLOWANCE – JSA (IB)

You and your partner are entitled to the same things as people getting Income Support – read page 18.

CONTRIBUTION-BASED JSA – JSA(C)

IMPORTANT: On its own, JSA(C) does not entitle you to help with health costs. If you have to pay health costs, check to see if you are in any of the groups listed on pages 5–7. You might be able to get help if you are on a low income – read pages 24–27.

If you are not sure about the type of JSA you are getting, ask at your Jobcentre Plus office.

OTHER BENEFITS

Only IS, JSA (IB) and Pension Credit Guarantee Credit give you automatic help with health costs.

IMPORTANT: Other benefits, such as Incapacity Benefit or Disability Living Allowance, don't entitle you to help with health costs. This is because they are not income related. If you have to pay health costs, check to see if you are in any of the other groups listed on pages 5–7. You can also get help if you are on a low income – read pages 24–27.

TAX CREDITS

These are:

- Working Tax Credit (WTC)
- Child Tax Credit (CTC)

1. If you meet the qualifying conditions (read paragraph 3 in this section) you will be sent an NHS tax credit exemption certificate by the Prescription Pricing Authority (PPA) – an NHS body based in Newcastle. The PPA will automatically send out certificates for the whole of the UK on behalf of the Health Departments in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. You do not need to apply for a certificate – but read paragraph 7.
2. If you meet the qualifying conditions you can get free:

- NHS prescriptions
- NHS dental treatment
- NHS sight tests
- NHS wigs and fabric supports.

You also get:

- vouchers towards the cost of glasses or contact lenses
- refunds of necessary travel costs to receive NHS treatment under the care of a consultant. This also applies to your partner or any dependent children and young people under 19. You can also get refunds of travel costs if any of the children named on the certificate need to go to hospital. (They are already entitled to the other help.)

3. To qualify for help with health costs:
 - your family income for tax credits must be £14,600* or less (this is on your tax credit award notice issued by the Inland Revenue) and one of the following applies:
 - you are working and have children = you get WTC and CTC, **or**
 - you are working and disabled = you get WTC with a disability element (for you) or severe disability element (this might be for you or your partner) – check your award notice
 - you are not eligible for WTC but get CTC.

** The £14,600 limit applies from 6 April 2004. If you are reading this after 6 April 2005, you should check to see if this figure has been increased.*

4. If you are unsure about the amount of your income for tax credit purposes, you can check this with the Inland Revenue Tax Credit Helpline on: 0845 300 3900 (England, Scotland and Wales).

For people with hearing or speech difficulties, the Inland Revenue Helpline number is 0845 300 3909 (England, Scotland, Wales).

5. If you have made a claim for tax credit but not yet received your award notice, you should contact the Inland Revenue on the above number (not the PPA).

NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificates

6. The Inland Revenue will send information to the PPA each month about people getting tax credits who are entitled to an exemption certificate. The PPA will send out exemption certificates. You don't have to apply for one.

If you have an award but no certificate

7. The PPA cannot send you an exemption certificate until they receive the information from the Inland Revenue. This could be up to six weeks after you get your tax credit award. If you meet the conditions for help listed in paragraph 3, you can sign NHS treatment forms to say you don't have to pay because you get tax credits.

Use your award notice as evidence of your entitlement until your certificate arrives.

8. If you are still unsure about whether or not you are entitled to an NHS tax credit exemption certificate, ring the PPA on 0845 609 9299, and have your tax credit award notice ready so you can tell the PPA what is on it.

If you lose your Tax Credit Exemption Certificate

9. Tell the PPA by writing to the: Exemption Issue Office, PO Box 1011, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE99 2ZP, and let them know what happened. They will send you a duplicate.

If you do not qualify for help through Tax Credit Exemption

10. If you do not meet the conditions in paragraph 3, you may be able to claim help through the NHS Low Income Scheme – read pages 24–27.
11. Ring the Inland Revenue Tax Credit Helpline (the telephone number is in paragraph 4) for advice about other help, as well as help with health costs that might be available through tax credits.

THE NHS LOW INCOME SCHEME

If you have to pay for any of the items listed on pages 2–3 of this leaflet, and are on a low income (for example, on incapacity benefit only), the NHS Low Income Scheme may be able to help you with health costs. (But if you have capital which is over the capital limits as shown on claim form HC1, you cannot claim any help through this scheme.)

If you have a partner, their property, savings and any other money is counted with yours.

If you would like to find out if the scheme can help you, pick up an HC1 form (claim for help with health costs) from a Jobcentre Plus office or NHS hospital. Your dentist or optician may have copies too, or ring 08701 555 455 for one.

You can fill in a special short claim form, the HC1(SC) if either of the following applies to you:

- you live permanently in a care home and the local authority helps you with the cost
- you are supported by the local authority because you are aged 16 or 17 and recently left local authority care.

Ask your home manager/local authority/care worker for an HC1(SC)

claim form. Otherwise, use the normal form, the HC1.

If you are aged 16 or over, you can make your own claim on an HC1, but you needn't do this if you count as a dependant of someone who is getting any of the eligible benefits or credits listed on pages 17–23.

If a dependent child under 16 has to go to hospital for NHS treatment, you can claim help with their travel costs. Any help will be based on the parent's income, not the child's.

Fill in the HC1 or HC1(SC) and send it off in the envelope that comes with it. The claim form tells you what to do and may ask you to send in evidence of your income.

If you have any queries about how to fill in these forms, or what to send, you can call the Patients Services Division (PSD) of the Prescription Pricing Authority on 0845 850 1166, or write to:

PSD, Sandyford House,
Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE2 1DB

After you have sent off the claim form, the PSD uses the information you have supplied to work out how much help you might get towards your health costs.

To work out your low income entitlement, your income will be compared with your 'requirements' (equivalent to income support applicable amounts), which include a personal allowance, premiums, plus housing costs and council tax you have to pay. Your requirements may include a disability premium (for qualifying people) from **28 weeks** after you are unable to work. The HC1 tells you more about this and explains what counts as income.

NHS Low Income Scheme Certificates

If you qualify for help you will be sent an NHS certificate HC2 for full help or an NHS certificate HC3 for partial help with health costs. The certificate will tell you who it covers and how long it lasts.

People seeking asylum and who are supported by the National Asylum Support Services (NASS) will be sent an NHS charges certificate (HC2) for full help with their first support payments – also read pages 28–29.

IMPORTANT: An HC2 certificate does not entitle you to NHS treatment. An HC2 entitles you to full help with health costs if you have been accepted for NHS treatment.

If you need help urgently with any health costs before IS, JSA (IB), Pension Credit or tax credits are awarded, make a separate claim on an HC1. Don't wait for your benefit or credit claim to be settled. But if you have a tax credit award notice, read pages 20–23 to see if you can get help without making a low income claim.

If you don't want to delay your NHS treatment or repair/replacement of glasses (but read page 35 first) or need emergency NHS dental treatment, you may need to pay and claim a refund later.

If you want to claim a refund of any health cost – read pages 49–55.

Other groups

WAR PENSIONERS

You get free NHS prescriptions and NHS wigs and fabric supports at the point of treatment if the treatment is for your accepted disablement and you have a valid war pension exemption certificate.

You can claim money back for dental treatment, travel costs, sight tests, glasses or contact lenses if the treatment, or the reason for travel, is for your accepted disablement. Write to: The Treatment Group, Veterans Agency, Norcross, Blackpool FY5 3WP. You can get a pre-paid addressed envelope from Post Offices.

Otherwise, check if you are in any of the groups listed on pages 5–7.

PEOPLE FROM ABROAD

People who come from abroad and are accepted as ordinarily resident in the UK (including asylum seekers given leave to remain in the UK and people accepted as coming to work or study in the UK), and who are accepted for NHS treatment, may claim help with health costs in the same way as other residents.

If you are accepted for NHS treatment, first check to see if you are in one of the groups listed on pages 5–7. Otherwise, you can make a claim under the NHS Low Income Scheme – read pages 24–27.

People seeking asylum and who are supported by the National Asylum Support Services (NASS) will be sent an NHS charges certificate (HC2) for full help with their first support payments.

Information for health staff, service planners and agencies providing advice to asylum seekers is in *Caring for dispersed asylum seekers – A resource pack*, a copy of which is available to download from the Department of Health’s website, at www.dh.gov.uk Please use the advanced search facility to look for the title.

PEOPLE WITH A SPECIFIED MEDICAL CONDITION

You can get free:

- NHS prescriptions if you have a valid medical exemption certificate because you have:
 - a permanent fistula (for example, caecostomy, colostomy, laryngostomy or ileostomy) requiring continuous surgical dressing or requiring an appliance

- a form of hypoadrenalism (for example, Addison’s Disease) for which specific substitution therapy is essential
- diabetes insipidus and other forms of hypopituitarism
- diabetes mellitus, except where treatment is by diet alone
- hypoparathyroidism
- myasthenia gravis
- myxoedema
- epilepsy requiring continuous anti-convulsive therapy
- you have a continuing physical disability which means you cannot go out without the help of another person.

NOTE: We ask doctors to advise you about free prescriptions, but it is up to you to find out if you are entitled or not. **Only** the conditions listed count. If you are unsure about the name of your condition, check with your doctor.

You can also get free:

- NHS prescriptions for the treatment of a sexually transmissible infection (STI) when the medication is supplied at a hospital or Primary Care Trust (PCT) clinic.
- NHS sight test if you:
 - are a diagnosed glaucoma patient
 - are aged 40 or over and are the parent, brother, sister, son or daughter of a person with diagnosed glaucoma

- have been advised by an ophthalmologist that you are at risk of glaucoma
- are a diagnosed diabetic.

NOTE: the medication to treat the STI is only free if it is supplied by the hospital or PCT clinic. You will have to pay charges in the normal way if the hospital or clinic gives you a prescription form to take to your ‘high street’ pharmacy, even if the medication is for an STI. You will also have to pay charges in the normal way for any other medication supplied by the hospital or clinic.

Getting your medical exemption certificate/card

- In England: before 30 September 2002 the cards were issued by the Health Authorities; since 1 October 2002 they are issued by the Prescription Pricing Authority
- In Scotland: by the Practitioner Services
- In Wales: by the Local Health Board.

To apply for a medical exemption (Medex) card, ask your doctor for Form FP92A (England), EC92A (Scotland) or FP92W (Wales). The form tells you what to do. Your GP, hospital or service doctor (or at the GP’s discretion a member of the GP’s practice who can access your medical records) will sign the form to confirm your statement.

In England, the card will start from the first day of the month that the Prescription Pricing Authority (PPA) receives the application form. Your exemption card will be posted to you.

Medical exemption cards normally last for five years and then need to be renewed. You may receive a reminder that your card needs to be renewed, but if not, it is your responsibility to ensure that it is renewed.

PREGNANT WOMEN AND THOSE WHO HAVE HAD A BABY IN THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS

You get free:

- NHS prescriptions – but only if you have a valid maternity exemption certificate/card issued in:
 - England: by the Prescription Pricing Authority
 - Scotland: by the Practitioner Services
 - Wales: by the local Health Board.
- NHS dental treatment if, when you are accepted for a course of treatment, you are pregnant or have borne a child in the previous 12 months.

To apply for your maternity exemption card ask your doctor, midwife or health visitor for Form FW8. The form tells you

what to do. Your doctor, midwife or health visitor will sign the form to confirm your statement.

Your exemption card will last until 12 months after the expected date of birth. If your baby is born early, you can continue to use your exemption card until it expires. If your baby is born late, you can apply for an extension. If you apply after your baby is born, your exemption card will run for 12 months from your baby's birth.

PEOPLE WHO NEED LOTS OF PRESCRIPTIONS BUT HAVE TO PAY CHARGES: PRESCRIPTION PREPAYMENT CERTIFICATES (PPC)

If you are not entitled to free prescriptions and you think you will have to pay for more than 5 items in 4 months or 14 items in 12 months, you may find it cheaper to buy a PPC.

England: Phone 0845 850 0030 to find out the cost of a PPC. You can also pay by credit or debit card by ringing this number. You can also buy on-line via the PPA website at www.ppa.org.uk

For payment by cheque or postal order, get Form FP95 from your pharmacy – the form tells you what to do.

Or find the form at: www.dh.gov.uk and use the advanced search for Prepayment of NHS Prescription Charges. For other enquiries about applications for English PPCs, or to report lost or stolen English PPCs, please ring 0845 601 8076.

Scotland: You can apply for a PPC by post by getting Form EC95. This is available from pharmacies, PCTs or Practitioners Services Division's Area Offices. The form tells you what to do. Or you can purchase a PPC over the counter at a participating community pharmacy or dispensing doctor's practice.

Wales: For payments by cheque or postal order, use Form FP95W, available from your Local Health Board.

PPC start date

The PPC will start from the date your application is received unless you ask for a different start date. This can be up to one month before or one month later than the date your application is received.

PEOPLE REGISTERED SEVERELY SIGHT-IMPAIRED/BLIND OR SIGHT-IMPAIRED/PARTIALLY SIGHTED

You get free NHS sight tests. If you need help with other health costs, check if you are in one of the groups listed on pages 5–7.

PEOPLE WHO NEED COMPLEX LENSES

You get free NHS sight tests if you're prescribed complex or powerful glasses with at least one lens which:

- has a power in any one meridian of plus or minus 10 or more dioptres; or
- is a prism-controlled bifocal lens.

You also get a voucher towards the cost of glasses.

PEOPLE WHO HAVE LOST OR DAMAGED THEIR GLASSES OR CONTACT LENSES

If you are under 16, you get a voucher towards the cost of repair or replacement.

If you are 16 or over, you may be entitled to a voucher towards the cost of repair or replacement if your PCT (Practitioner Services in Scotland) agrees that:

- the loss or damage was due to illness (illness or disability in Scotland)

- you can't get any help through a warranty, insurance or after sales service
- you would be entitled to an NHS voucher for glasses or contact lenses – read page 12.

PEOPLE WITH IMPAIRED HEARING

You can get free, on loan, NHS hearing aids. The aids will be supplied with batteries (and replacements) and fitted, serviced and maintained free of charge.

If you want more information, please ask your GP.

PEOPLE LIVING IN A CARE HOME

These were previously called residential care homes or nursing homes. Living in care home does not automatically entitle you to help.

- if you are under 60 and getting Income Support – read page 18
- if you are 60 or over and getting Pension Credit Guarantee Credit – read page 18
- if the local Authority helps you with all or part of the cost – read page 24.
- otherwise, check to see if you are in any of the other groups listed on pages 5–7 or check to see if you can get help via the NHS Low Income Scheme – read page 24.

PEOPLE SUPPORTED BY A LOCAL AUTHORITY AFTER LEAVING CARE – CARE LEAVERS

If you are aged 16 or 17 and supported by a local authority because you recently left local authority care, you are entitled to full help with health costs through the NHS Low Income Scheme – read page 24.

If you are not supported by a local authority and you are not getting Income Support or Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or Child Tax Credit, you may still be able to get help through the Low Income Scheme. Also check if you are in any of the groups on pages 5–7.

NHS IN-PATIENTS

You get free:

- all NHS treatment,
- NHS wigs and fabric supports supplied while in hospital
- glasses or contact lenses supplied through the hospital eye department (but you must choose the cheapest frame available). If you choose a more expensive one (except for medical reasons), you will have to pay the difference
- medication given to you while you are still an in-patient to take home with you when you leave hospital.

NOTE: If you ask a dentist or optician to visit you in hospital, you will have to pay the cost in the normal way, as if you were being treated at their practice. Read pages 5–7 to see if you are in a group that can get free NHS dental treatment, a free NHS sight test or vouchers towards your glasses.

NHS OUT-PATIENTS/DAY PATIENTS

You get free:

- all medication given to take while you're being treated at the hospital. But you pay a prescription charge(s) for any medication you are prescribed to take at home, unless you're entitled to free NHS prescriptions
- medication supplied at a hospital to treat an STI
- NHS dental treatment carried out at the hospital (but there may be a charge for dentures and bridges unless you are entitled to free NHS dental treatment)
- sight tests. If your consultant refers you to an optometrist for a sight test as part of the management of your eye condition while you are still a patient of the hospital eye department, that sight test is free. If your consultant decides that for clinical reasons you need frequent changes of glasses or contact lenses,

you will only have to pay for the first pair. You may also get help towards the first pair if you are in one of the groups entitled to a voucher – read page 12.

PEOPLE WHO NEED TO TRAVEL TO RECEIVE NHS TREATMENT

You may be entitled to help with your travelling costs if:

- you attend a hospital, or other place, to receive NHS treatment under the care of a consultant. This includes tests and check-ups and visits for treatment of STIs
- you travel by the cheapest means of transport which it is reasonable for you to use
- in the opinion of your doctor, you need someone to travel with you, your companion's travel costs are added to your travel costs and it's your income that counts
- you are getting benefits or credits – read pages 17–23
- you have a low income – read pages 24–27
- you are 16 or over but under 19 and are counted as a dependant of someone getting any of the benefits/credits on pages 17–23, you get help via that benefit credit

- you are 16 and over and not a dependant of a person who gets benefits/credits, you can make your own claim, even if you live with your parents – read pages 24–27
- the patient is a child under 16; it is their parent’s income that counts. If someone else takes them to hospital, it is still the parents’ income that counts.

If you are not sure what travel costs you can get help with, ask the hospital before you travel. For more information go to: www.dh.gov.uk and use the advanced search facility to look up NHS travel costs.

NHS TREATMENT ABROAD

You may be able to get help with the cost of travel from your home to the international rail terminal, port or airport where you leave Great Britain. The arrangements are the same as if you were travelling from home to receive NHS treatment under the care of a consultant – read page 39 and above.

Regardless of your income, you can get help with the cost of return travel from the point where you leave GB to where you are going to be treated. Your method of travel (e.g. air or rail) and the cost must be agreed before you travel by the person arranging your

treatment. If the person arranging your treatment considers that you need someone to travel with you, ask them about help with your companion’s travel costs.

OTHER TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

The Isles of Scilly

You get help with the cost of travel to a mainland hospital for NHS treatment. Leaflet HC12 tells you how much this is. See your health centre before you travel.

Former Scottish Highlands and Islands Development Board Area

You get help with the cost of travel to hospital for NHS treatment, provided you have to travel at least 30 miles (48km), or more than 5 miles (8km) by sea, to get to hospital. See your doctor before you travel.

Scilly and Scotland

There is a set maximum you have to pay unless you get free travel, or help with the costs. Leaflet HC12 tells you how much this is.

Claiming help when you go for treatment

NHS PRESCRIPTIONS

People who don't have to pay should fill in the back of their prescription form. Put a cross in the first box in Part 1 that applies to you and complete and sign Part 3 on the back of the prescription form. If someone else (your representative) goes to get your prescription, they should complete the back of the prescription form. Or you can do this before you give them the prescription form. You, or your representative, may be asked to show proof of your entitlement to free prescriptions – check the tables on pages 56–61 for more information about this.

NHS DENTAL TREATMENT

Tell the dentist you want NHS treatment when you make the appointment. Sign the form you are given when you go for treatment. If you don't have to pay, put a cross in the appropriate box. If you have a valid HC2 certificate, write in the certificate number.

If you have a valid HC3 certificate, write in the certificate number and the maximum your certificate says you can pay. You will pay either what appears on the certificate, the actual charge or the maximum charge, whichever is the least. See leaflet HC12 (HC12W in Wales) for details of charges.

If your circumstances change before you are asked to pay, read page 9 to see if you are entitled to free NHS dental treatment. You may be asked to show proof of your entitlement to help with dental costs – check the tables on pages 62–67 for more information about this.

SIGHT TESTS

When you go for your sight test, tell the optician if you are entitled to a free NHS sight test and ask for Form GOS1 to apply for it.

- If you have a valid HC2 certificate for full help, you must show it to your optician.
- If you are severely sight-impaired/blind or sight-impaired/partially sighted, the name and address of the Local Authority where you're registered has to be put on Form GOS1.

- If you have diabetes or glaucoma, or have been advised by an ophthalmologist that you are at risk of glaucoma, the name and address of your doctor has to be put on form GOS1.
- If you already need a complex lens, show the optician your last prescription or the glasses you are wearing.

The optician will give you Form GOS2 showing the results of your sight test.

If you have a valid HC3 Certificate, show it to the optician and ask if you are entitled to any help with the cost of your private sight test. You apply for this help on Form GOS5.

NHS VOUCHERS FOR GLASSES OR CONTACT LENSES

- There is more information about using vouchers on the back of your GOS2 form.
- Ask for a GOS3 voucher form when you have your sight test, or when you order your glasses or contact lenses. A GOS3 voucher form is valid for two years, but you can only use it if you are still entitled to a voucher for glasses or contact lenses when you order them.

- The optician will ask you to fill in and sign GOS3 when you order your lenses or glasses to say why you are entitled to the voucher and to confirm that you have received your glasses or contact lenses. Show the optician proof of your entitlement to use a voucher.
- If you have a valid HC3 certificate, you can ask for a GOS3 voucher form. Show your HC3 to the optician when you order glasses or contact lenses and ask if you can get any help towards the cost. Your voucher value will be reduced by the amount shown on your HC3.
- Scotland – ask your optician for the Scottish version of the forms mentioned.

You may be asked to show proof of your entitlement to a free sight test or optical voucher. Check the tables on pages 68–75.

NHS VOUCHERS FOR REPAIR OR REPLACEMENT OF GLASSES OR CONTACT LENSES

Ask your optician for Form GOS4 – it tells you what to do.

In Scotland, ask your optician for the Scottish version of the GOS form mentioned.

TRAVEL TO RECEIVE NHS TREATMENT UNDER THE CARE OF A CONSULTANT

When you go for treatment, tell the hospital (or place where you are being treated) that you want to claim back the cost of your journey. You will be asked to show proof of your entitlement, such as your benefit book, your tax credit exemption certificate or your HC2 certificate. Also keep any tickets or receipts you have as proof of the cost.

If you have a valid HC3 certificate and your journeys cost more in total in any one week than your certificate says you have to pay, show the HC3 certificate at the hospital and ask if you are entitled to any money back.

NHS WIGS AND FABRIC SUPPORTS

Tell the person who fits your wig or fabric support that you are entitled to to it free, and show proof of your entitlement or war pension exemption certificate.

If you have a valid HC3 certificate, show it to the person who fits your wig or fabric support and ask if you are entitled to any help with the charge. For each item, the most you will pay will be the amount on the certificate or the actual cost – whichever is the least.

Checks of entitlement

If you are claiming free treatment, or you are using an optical voucher, you should show proof of why you don't have to pay or why you can use a voucher. For example, your benefit book, birth certificate or NHS exemption certificate. For more information about this – read the tables on pages 56–75.

If you cannot show proof, you will have to sign to say why you don't have to pay (or can have an optical voucher) and you will get your NHS treatment free, or be able to use your optical voucher. But your treatment form will be marked as 'no evidence seen' so your entitlement can be checked later. You won't be able to get partial help unless you show your HC3.

CHECKING YOUR ENTITLEMENT

Checks will be made as follows:

- Free prescriptions. The checks will be made by the NHS Counter Fraud and Security Management Service.
- Full or partial help with NHS dental treatment. The checks will be made by the Dental Practice Board.
- Free NHS sight tests and vouchers towards the cost of glasses or contact lenses. The checks will be made by your local Primary Care Trust (PCT).

In Scotland, checks will be made by NHS Scotland Counter Fraud Services. In Wales, checks will be made by your Local Health Board.

The penalty charge

Any patient found to have wrongly claimed help with health costs will now face penalty charges and, in some cases, prosecution under new powers introduced by the Health Act 1999.

The penalty charge is a civil fine and may be imposed where a patient is found to have wrongly claimed total or partial help with health costs. The penalty charge is five times the amount owed, up to a maximum of £100. This is in addition to the original charge. Payment will be pursued by civil recovery if necessary.

For further information about penalty charges pick up leaflet HC81(Pen) *The Penalty Charge Explained* from your doctor, pharmacy or dentist. Or ring **08701 555 455** to order a copy. Or go to www.cfsm.nhs.uk, click on 'Documents' and go to 'Penalty Charge Guidance'. Or ring **0845 850 1166** for advice.

In Scotland, further information is contained in the leaflet *Don't Just Help Yourself*.

Claiming refunds

NHS PRESCRIPTION CHARGES

Ask your pharmacist, hospital or doctor for an NHS receipt form FP57 (WP57 in Wales) **when you pay** – you can't get one later. The receipt form tells you what to do. You have to apply for a refund within 3 months of paying the prescription charge.

PRESCRIPTION PREPAYMENT CERTIFICATE (PPC) FEES

Full refunds

You can only get a full refund if, within the first month of a **4- or 12-month** PPC, any of the following happens:

- you become entitled to free prescriptions and, if applicable, you have a valid NHS exemption certificate
- you go into hospital and remain there until the expiry of the prepayment certificate
- the PPC holder dies, or goes into hospital and dies there before the certificate runs out.

Proportional refunds: 4- and 12-month PPCs

The patient's estate can get a proportional refund if, after the first month of a **4- or 12-month** PPC start date:

- the PPC holder dies; or
- goes into hospital and dies there before the certificate runs out.

The fee will be refunded proportionally in respect of complete months unexpired. For example, a 12-month PPC starts in June, the holder dies in January, refund for February to May of 4/12 of the fee paid.

Partial refunds: 12-month PPCs

You can get a partial refund for **12-month** PPCs only if, in months 2–4 of the PPC start date, any of the following happens:

- you become entitled to free prescriptions; and if applicable, you have a valid NHS exemption certificate
- you go into hospital and remain there until the expiry of the certificate.

You will be refunded the cost of the 12-month PPC less the cost of a 4-month PPC.

Making the claim

If you wish to claim a refund for any of the reasons listed, send the original certificate to the Prescription Pricing Authority, PPC Issue Office, PO Box 845, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE99 2DE, telling them the reason why you want to claim a refund.

Scotland: If you live within the following Health Board areas: Argyll and Clyde, Ayrshire and Arran, Dumfries and Galloway, Greater Glasgow, Lanarkshire and the Western Isles, send your claim to: Practitioner Services Division, Clifton House, Clifton Place, Glasgow G3 7LN.

If you live within the following Health Board areas: Borders, Fife, Forth Valley and Lothian, send your claim to: Practitioner Services Division, Stevenson House, 555 Gorgie Road, Edinburgh EH11 3LG.

If you live within the following Health Board areas: Grampian, Highland, Orkney, Shetland and Tayside, send your claim to: Practitioner Services Division, Summerfield House, 1 Gairsay Road, Aberdeen AB15 6GF.

Wales: please contact your Local Health Board.

NOTE: See over for time limits for claiming.

Time limits for making PPC refund claims

You must make your claim for a refund so it is received within the following time limits:

- Following the death of the PPC holder – claim within 24 months of death.
- If you become entitled to free prescriptions:
 - 4-month PPC holders: claim must be received within four months of the start of the PPC;
 - 12-month PPC holders: claim must be received within seven months of the start of the PPC.
- You go into hospital and remain there until the certificate expires: claim must be received within three months of the PPC expiry date.

OTHER REFUNDS

You will need a receipt which shows you have paid for NHS treatment (see following paragraphs for details). For **income-based** claims, use Form HC5 available from Jobcentre Plus offices or NHS hospitals. Your dentist or optician may have one or ring 08701 555 455 to get one. The HC5 tells you what to do. You will need to write a letter (enclosing your receipt) to apply for a refund for **other reasons**, see page 53. You have to claim a refund within three months of paying the health cost.

NHS DENTAL CHARGES

Ask your dentist for NHS receipt form FP64 (GP17D in Scotland) or a receipt which shows the amount of the NHS charge and the date you paid.

If you are claiming on the grounds of low income, complete Form HC5.

England: your claim will go to the Dental Practice Board who will check that you received NHS treatment and paid the charge claimed before sending out payment.

Scotland: your claim will go to the Practitioners Services.

Wales: your claim will go to your Local Health Board.

If you want to claim a refund for another reason, for example, because you are pregnant, you will need to explain why you are claiming a refund. Enclose your receipt and make sure you include your full name and the address of your dentist, and write to:

England: Dental Practice Board, Compton Place Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN20 8AD.

Scotland: Practitioner Services of the Common Services Agency, Trinity Park House, South Trinity Road, Edinburgh EH5 3SG.

Wales: your Local Health Board.

SIGHT TEST FEES

Ask the person who tests your sight for a receipt that shows that you paid for the test and the date of payment. Complete an HC5 refund claim form, making sure you put the date of your sight test on it. The HC5 tells you what to do next.

GLASSES OR CONTACT LENS COSTS

If you have already used a voucher towards the cost of your glasses or lenses, you cannot get a refund unless it was only a 'complex lens' voucher. Nor can you claim a refund of the difference between the voucher value and the actual cost of your glasses or lenses, even if they cost more than the voucher value.

If you want to claim a refund, ask the person who supplies your glasses or contact lenses for a receipt which shows how much you paid and the date of payment. Complete an HC5 refund form and make sure you enclose your optical prescription and your receipt with your HC5 when you send it off. The form tells you what to do. The maximum refund you can get back will be the voucher value which matches your prescription.

Lost or damaged glasses or contact lenses

If your glasses or contact lenses have been lost or damaged and you pay for replacement or repairs, you will only be considered for a refund if you are entitled to a voucher. But, your Primary Care Trust (in Scotland your Practitioner Services; in Wales your Local Health Board) has to agree that the loss or damage was due to illness (illness or disability in Scotland) before payment can be made – read page 35.

TRAVEL COSTS TO RECEIVE NHS TREATMENT

If you receive NHS treatment under the care of a consultant, usually an NHS hospital will give you your refund when you go for treatment. If this is not possible, ask the hospital for an HC5 refund claim form – the form tells you what to do. If you receive NHS treatment under the care of a consultant other than at an NHS hospital, ask for form HC5 when you go for treatment.

NHS WIGS AND FABRIC SUPPORTS CHARGES

Ask the hospital for a receipt that shows that you have paid an NHS charge, and complete an HC5 refund claim form. The form tells you what do.

FREE NHS PRESCRIPTIONS

Proof of entitlement

You can get free prescriptions if you are:	The proof you need to have	Where and how to get proof
<p>Under 16 Under 25 and your prescription is dispensed in Wales 60 or over</p>	<p>A date of birth printed on your prescription. If it is not on your prescription, show your NHS medical card, current Child Benefit award notice, pension book, passport, birth certificate, driving licence, or any other official papers showing your name and date of birth.</p>	<p>NHS medical cards are sent to you when you are first registered as a patient with a GP. If you need a card, contact your local Primary Care Trust. NOTE: Some Primary Care Trusts no longer issue NHS medical cards; in this case use one of the other documents mentioned. (In Scotland contact your NHS Board; in Wales your Local Health Board.)</p>
<p>Aged 16, 17 or 18 in full-time education</p>	<p>A current Child Benefit award notice. You can show proof of your date of birth (which might be on your prescription – see above) and proof that you are a full-time student.</p>	<p>The Child Benefit Centre. 0845 302 1444. Your school, college, university or local education authority can give you proof that you are in qualifying full-time education (see page 15).</p>

You can get free prescriptions if you are:	The proof you need to have
Pregnant or have borne a child in the previous 12 months and are named on a valid maternity exemption certificate or card	A maternity exemption certificate or card (Matex).
Named on a valid medical exemption certificate or card because you have a listed medical condition	A medical exemption certificate or card (Medex).
Are a war pensioner, the prescription is for your accepted disablement, and you are named on a valid war pension exemption certificate	A war pension exemption certificate.
Named on a valid prescription prepayment certificate	A prescription prepayment certificate.

Where and how to get proof
<p>Ask your GP, midwife or health visitor for an FW8 application form. The form tells you what to do. A certificate/card will be sent to you upon receipt of a properly completed application form.</p>
<p>Ask your GP or NHS hospital for an FP92A application form (in Scotland – EC92A; in Wales – FP92W). The form tells you what to do. A certificate/card will be sent to you upon receipt of a properly completed application form.</p>
<p>Write to: The Veterans Agency, Norcross, Blackpool FY5 3WP.</p>
<p>England: Phone 0845 850 0030 (8am to 6pm) to pay by credit or debit card. For payments by cheque get an application form (FP95) from your pharmacy. The FP95 tells you what to do. Or buy online via www.ppa.org.uk.</p> <p>Scotland: Get EC95 to buy by post or purchase at participating outlets (see page 33). Wales: Contact your Local Health Board and ask for an FP95W.</p>

You can get free prescriptions if you are:	The proof you need to have
Getting Income Support, or your partner is getting this benefit	Your Income Support order book, or an entitlement letter from your Jobcentre Plus office.
Getting Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, or your partner is getting this benefit	An entitlement letter from your Jobcentre Plus office.
Getting Pension Credit Guarantee Credit, or your partner is getting this benefit	Your award notice from the Pension Service.
Getting tax credits and meeting the qualifying conditions. Or your partner receives tax credits and meets the qualifying conditions	A valid NHS tax credit exemption certificate, or you can use your tax credit award notice.
Named on a valid HC2 certificate	An NHS certificate HC2 for full help with health costs.

Where and how to get proof

You have to claim the benefit at your Jobcentre Plus office (the address will be in your local telephone book). Incapacity Benefit or Disability Living Allowance do not count as they are not income related.

If payments are made into your bank or building society, you can obtain proof in the form of an entitlement letter from your Jobcentre Plus office. If you have lost or mislaid your Pension Service award notice, contact the Pension Service phone line on 0845 606 0265.

If you are eligible for free prescriptions, your exemption certificate will be sent to you. If you haven't yet received your certificate, use your award notice.

Make a claim using Form HC1, obtainable from your Jobcentre Plus office or by calling 0845 850 1166 or 08701 555 455. You may also be able to get an HC1 from your local hospital, dentist, optician or doctor.

FREE NHS DENTAL TREATMENT

Proof of entitlement

You can get free dental treatment if, when the treatment starts, you are:

The proof you need to have

Where and how to get proof

Under 18 years old

Any official document showing your name and date of birth, such as a birth certificate, NHS medical card or passport.

NHS medical cards are given out when you are first registered as a patient with a GP. If you need a card, contact your local Primary Care Trust.
NOTE: Some Primary Care Trusts no longer issue NHS medical cards; in this case use one of the other documents mentioned. (In Scotland contact your NHS Board; in Wales your Local Health Board.)

Aged 18 in full-time education

A current Child Benefit award notice. You can show proof of your date of birth, such as a birth certificate or passport and proof that you are a full-time student.

The Child Benefit Centre. 0845 302 1444. Your school, college, university or local education authority can give you proof that you are in qualifying full-time education (see page 15).

Pregnant or have borne a child in the previous 12 months

MatB1 certificate or NHS prescription maternity exemption certificate or card (Matex) or notification of birth form, birth certificate or stillbirth certificate.

MatB1 certificates are issued by your GP or registered midwife. You can use your prescription maternity exemption certificate or card (Matex) as proof. To get one ask your GP, midwife or health visitor for an FW8 application form. The form tells you what to do. The midwife who delivers your baby will give you a notification of birth form. Birth certificates and stillbirth certificates are issued by your local registrar of births, marriages and deaths.

You can get free dental treatment if, when the treatment starts, or when the charge is made, you are:

The proof you need to have

Getting Income Support, or your partner is getting this benefit

Your Income Support order book, or an entitlement letter from your Jobcentre Plus office.

Getting Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, or your partner is getting this benefit

An entitlement letter from your Jobcentre Plus office.

Getting Pension Credit Guarantee Credit, or your partner is getting this benefit

Your award notice from the Pension Service.

Getting tax credits and meeting the qualifying conditions. Or your partner receives tax credits and meets the qualifying conditions

A valid NHS tax credit exemption certificate, or you can use your tax credit award notice.

Where and how to get proof

You have to claim the benefit at your Jobcentre Plus office (the address will be in your local telephone book). Incapacity Benefit or Disability Living Allowance do not count as they are not income-related.

If payments are made into your bank or building society, you can obtain proof in the form of an entitlement letter from your Jobcentre Plus office. If you have lost or mislaid your Pension Service award notice, contact the Pension Service phone line on 0845 606 0265.

If you are eligible for free treatment, your exemption certificate will be sent to you. If you haven't yet received your certificate, use your award notice.

You can get free dental treatment if, when the treatment starts, or when the charge is made, you are:

The proof you need to have

Named on a valid HC2 certificate

An NHS certificate HC2 for full help with health costs.

Named on a valid HC3 certificate

The cost may be reduced if you are named on an NHS certificate HC3 for partial help with health costs.

Where and how to get proof

Make a claim using form HC1, obtainable from your Jobcentre Plus office or by calling 0845 850 1166 or 08701 555 455. You may also be able to get an HC1 from your local hospital, dentist, optician or doctor.

FREE NHS SIGHT TESTS

Proof of entitlement

You can get a free NHS sight test if you are:

The proof you need to have

Aged 60 or over

Any official document showing your name and date of birth, such as a birth certificate, NHS medical card, passport, travel concession card, driving licence, state retirement pension book.

Aged 40 and over and are the parent, brother, sister, or son or daughter of a person with glaucoma

An official document to prove your date of birth – see above.

Registered severely sight-impaired/blind or sight-impaired/partially sighted

Certificate of registration as severely sight-impaired/blind or sight-impaired/partially sighted.

Where and how to get proof

NHS medical cards are sent to you when you are first registered as a patient with a GP. If you need a card, contact your local Primary Care Trust.
NOTE: Some Primary Care Trusts no longer issue NHS medical cards; in this case use one of the other documents mentioned. (In Scotland contact your NHS Board; in Wales your Local Health Board.)

NHS medical card – see above.

Contact your local authority.

You can get a free NHS sight test if you are:

The proof you need to have

Suffering from diabetes

Repeat prescriptions card, out-patients appointment card, record of blood sugar readings.

Suffering from glaucoma

Statement that you are a glaucoma sufferer.

Considered to be at risk of glaucoma

Statement that you are at risk of developing glaucoma.

In need of complex lenses

Take your existing glasses or existing optical prescription

Where and how to get proof

Your GP, or your hospital diabetic or eye clinic. Your repeat prescription or outpatient card should show you are attending a diabetic clinic on a regular basis.

Your GP, or your hospital eye clinic.

Your GP, or your hospital eye clinic.

If you don't already have complex lenses, your optician will advise if you are eligible

FREE NHS SIGHT TESTS AND OPTICAL VOUCHERS

Proof of entitlement

You can get a free NHS sight test and an optical voucher if you are:

The proof you need to have

Aged under 16

Show your NHS medical card, current Child Benefit award notice, pension book, passport, birth certificate.

Aged 16, 17 or 18 in full-time education

A current Child Benefit award notice or you can show proof of your date of birth, such as your birth certificate or passport, and proof that you are a full-time student.

Where and how to get proof

NHS medical cards are sent to you when you are first registered as a patient with a GP. If you need a card, contact your local Primary Care Trust.
NOTE: Some Primary Care Trusts no longer issue NHS medical cards; in this case use one of the other documents mentioned. (In Scotland contact your NHS Board; in Wales your Local Health Board.)

The Child Benefit Centre. 0845 302 1444.
Your school, college, university or your local education authority can give you proof that you are in qualifying full-time education (see page 15).

You can get a free NHS sight test and an optical voucher if you are:

The proof you need to have

Getting Income Support, or your partner is getting this benefit

Your Income Support order book, or an entitlement letter from your Jobcentre Plus office.

Getting Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, or your partner is getting this benefit

An entitlement letter from your Jobcentre Plus office.

Getting Pension Credit Guarantee Credit, or your partner is getting this benefit

Your order book, or an entitlement letter from your Jobcentre Plus office.

Getting tax credits and meeting the qualifying conditions. Or your partner receives tax credits and meets the qualifying conditions

A valid NHS tax credit exemption certificate or you can use your tax credit award notice.

Named on a valid HC2 certificate

An NHS certificate HC2 for full help with health costs.

Named on a valid HC3 certificate

The cost may be reduced if you are named on an NHS certificate HC3 for partial help with health costs.

Where and how to get proof

You have to claim the benefit at your Jobcentre Plus office (the address will be in your local telephone book). Incapacity Benefit or Disability Living Allowance do not count as they are not income-related.

If payments are made into your bank or building society, you can obtain proof in the form of an entitlement letter from your Jobcentre Plus office. If you have lost or mislaid your Pension Service award notice, contact the Pension Service phone line on 0845 606 0265.

If you are eligible for free prescriptions, your exemption certificate will be sent to you. If you haven't yet received your certificate, use your award notice.

Make a claim using Form HC1, obtainable from your Jobcentre Plus office or by calling 0845 850 1166 or 08701 555 455. You may also be able to get one from your local hospital, dentist, optician or doctor.

Ordering forms and leaflets

PRINTED VERSIONS

The items listed below are available from:

Department of Health
PO Box 777
London SE1 6XH
Telephone: 08701 555 455
Fax: 01623 724524
Email: dh@prolog.uk.com

Ask for:

- HC1 Help with health costs **claim form**
- HC5 Help with health costs **refund claim form**. For all health costs except prescription charges (ask for FP57 when you pay a prescription charge, to claim a refund)
- HC11 (this leaflet) Please quote product reference **HC11 Help with health costs/35002**
The HC11 can also be made available in braille on request
- HC12 NHS charges and optical voucher values (England and Scotland)
- HC12W Wales
- HC81(Pen) **The Penalty Charge Explained**
- 31179 WMV: G1 – Free milk and vitamins: a guide for families
- HB6 A practical guide for disabled people or carers (where to find information, services and equipment). Quote reference 29614.

ELECTRONIC INFORMATION

The following are on the DH website at: www.dh.gov.uk Use the advanced search facility to find the document you need:

- HC11 Help with health costs
- HC12 NHS charges and optical voucher values
- **Caring for dispersed asylum seekers – a resource pack** – Information for health staff, service planners and agencies providing advice for asylum seekers.

Information about the following are on the DH website:

- WMV: G1 – Welfare milk and vitamins: a guide for families
- HB6 A practical guide for disabled people or carers (Where to find information, services and equipment)

HC81(Pen): on www.cfsms.nhs.uk; click on 'Documents' and go to 'Penalty Charge Guidance'.

HC12W: on www.wales.gov.uk/subihealth/content/forms/index-e.htm

TRANSLATION SERVICE

If you have any queries and English is not your first language, call the Patient Services of the Prescription Pricing Authority on 0845 850 1166. They have a telephone interpretation service. When you call, say in English, or ask a friend to say in English, that you have a query in another language and state the language you need.

Advice lines

Health cost advice lines

For more information about anything in this booklet, ring 0845 850 1166 (local call rates). But see below if you have a query about an exemption or prepayment certificate.

Medical and Maternity Exemption Certificates

England: 0845 601 8076

Scotland: contact Practitioner Services

Wales: contact your Local Health Board

Prescription Prepayment Certificates

England: for price, phone orders and enquiries: 0845 850 0030

Scotland: contact Practitioner Services

Wales: contact your Local Health Board

NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificates England, Scotland and Wales

Call 0845 609 9299 (please have your tax credit award notice ready to answer questions). Does not deal with enquiries about tax credit applications or entitlement to an award notice.

Inland Revenue – Tax Credit helpline

For enquiries about applications or entitlement to Tax Credit Award Notices **England, Scotland and Wales:**
0845 300 3900

For people with hearing or speech difficulties **England, Scotland and Wales:** 0845 300 3909

Health advice

24-hour confidential nurse advice and health information service

NHS Direct (England and Wales):

0845 46 47

Scotland, ring NHS24 on:

0845 4 24 24 24.

Currently, only available in the following Health Board areas: Grampian, Highland, Greater Glasgow, Ayrshire and Arran.

Please note: NHS Direct/NHS24 do not deal with tax credit queries.

