



Your health, your rights

Safety: the right to safe and effective care

Who is this factsheet for and what is it about?

- This factsheet is for anyone who uses the NHS in any part of Scotland.
- The 2012 Charter of Patient Rights and Responsibilities gives a summary of what you can expect when you use the NHS in Scotland, together with your rights and responsibilities. The Safety section of the Charter tells you about your right to safe and effective NHS care. This factsheet explains what this means for you.

‘You have the right to expect that any care and treatment you receive is provided with reasonable care and ordinary skill by properly qualified and experienced staff.’

The Charter of Patient Rights and Responsibilities 2012

What can I expect from the NHS?

- The NHS will provide the best care and treatment it can, within the resources available.
- The NHS will provide care and treatment in a safe and clean setting. Hospitals and other places where you receive care and treatment should meet standards of hygiene agreed by the NHS and monitored by the Healthcare Environment Inspectorate. See page 4 for further information.
- The NHS will provide health services that take account of your needs and, as far as possible, your preferences.
- The NHS will make sure everyone working in the NHS has the right training and skills for their job.

Your personal health information

- Your health records can be held in different parts of the NHS (for example at your GP practice and at a hospital), and they can be handwritten, held on computer, or both.

- Sometimes staff will share relevant information about you with other staff involved in your care. This makes caring for you safer, easier and faster. For example, information is shared when your GP refers you to the hospital or when you are moved from one hospital to another. See page 5 for information on the *Your health, your rights* factsheet relating to Confidentiality.
- The NHS will keep accurate and up-to-date records of the care and treatment you receive.

‘You have the right to expect that your personal health information is kept accurate and up-to-date.’

The Charter of Patient Rights and Responsibilities 2012

Your medicines

- You can expect that any medicines your doctor or other qualified health professional prescribes are appropriate for you.
- Any health professional that prescribes or gives you a medicine must make sure you know how to use it safely.

What can I do to help the NHS?

Ask about anything you don’t understand

- If there’s anything you don’t understand about your health or treatment let staff know and they will explain it.
- Ask staff to explain any words that you don’t know.

Follow advice and treatment

- Try to follow any advice or treatment staff have agreed with you.
- If you are worried about doing this, discuss it with the person giving you the advice or treatment. You can also contact your GP surgery, or speak to someone at your local pharmacy.

Take care with medicines

- Follow the instructions that you’re given about taking any medicine the NHS give you.
- If you have questions about your medicine, ask the doctor in charge of your care.
- Finish any course of agreed treatment. If you decide to change or stop your treatment, discuss this with your doctor or pharmacist first.

- Tell staff if you are allergic to any medicines or if you have had side effects after taking a particular medicine.
- Don't take medicine that is out of date or prescribed for someone else.
- Give any out-of-date or unused medicine to your pharmacist to get rid of safely.
- Always try to order repeat prescriptions in plenty of time.
- Store medicines safely and out of the reach of children.
- If you go into hospital, let staff know about any medicines you are already taking. The best way to do this is to take all your medicines with you and give them to a member of staff. If you can't do this, try to bring with you a list of all the medicines you are taking and give it to a member of staff.

Help stop the spread of infection

- Clean hands help stop the spread of infection. Always wash and dry your hands before visiting a hospital ward, particularly after going to the toilet. Use the hand gel provided at the ward door or at the bedside.
- You should not visit a patient in hospital or a resident in a care home if you are feeling unwell, or if you or someone you live with is suffering from vomiting or diarrhoea. You should wait 48 hours after the vomiting or diarrhoea has stopped before visiting. If you are unwell you may be able to phone the ward or care home and speak to the person instead.
- If you visit someone in hospital, don't sit on their bed. Also, keep the number of visitors as low as possible at any time. Never touch dressings, drips or other equipment around the bed.
- Ask ward staff for advice before you bring food, drink or flowers for someone you are visiting in hospital.

'You should help to prevent the spread of infection in places where you or someone you are visiting receive NHS care.'

The Charter of Patient Rights and Responsibilities 2012

Tell staff about any concerns

- If you think a member of staff has forgotten to wash their hands before examining you, ask them to do this.
- If you think NHS premises are not as clean as they should be, let staff know. If you are in hospital, you can speak to the ward sister or charge nurse about this.

- You can also report your concerns to the Healthcare Environment Inspectorate (HEI). Every acute hospital in Scotland is inspected by HEI to make sure that the care you receive is safe and effective. The inspection team talks to patients, relatives and visitors, and listen to what is important to them. If the Inspection Team finds issues, it will make sure that the NHS Board involved takes action to address these. [See page 6 on how to contact HEI.](#)

Take part in screening and immunisation programmes available to you

- You should attend for screening. NHS screening programmes can help detect a disease very early - for example breast or bowel cancer. This gives the best chance of the disease being cured.
- You should take part in immunisation programmes. This is to help protect you against serious diseases like measles, tuberculosis and seasonal flu, and will help to stop the spread of infection.

Be prepared when travelling abroad

- Make sure you have enough medicines for your trip.
- If you're going to European Economic Area (EEA) country or Switzerland on holiday or a business trip, you should apply for a free European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). Your EHIC lets you get state health care at a reduced cost or sometimes for free. It will cover medical treatment you may need if you're ill or have an accident, and also the treatment of pre-existing medical conditions. [See page 6 for how to apply.](#)
- In many countries patients have to pay for their treatment. You should get travel insurance with medical cover before your trip. You should do this even if you have an EHIC, as the card won't cover you for costs such as rescue services in ski resorts, or being flown back to the UK.

How can I find out more?

- You can find out more about anything in this factsheet, or get **The Charter of Patient Rights and Responsibilities**, the **Your health, your rights** factsheets or other leaflets and factsheets listed below from:
 - GP surgeries, hospitals and other places where you receive NHS services
 - www.hris.org.uk (alternative formats are also available here) or at www.nhsinform.co.uk
 - the NHS inform Helpline on **0800 22 44 88** (lines are open every day from 8am to 10pm)

- the **Patient Advice & Support Service (PASS)** at your local citizen's advice bureau (find your nearest bureau on the internet at www.cas.org.uk or in your local phone book). PASS is independent and provides free, confidential information, advice and support to anyone who uses the NHS in Scotland.

Information about health rights

- The **Charter of Patient Rights and Responsibilities** gives a summary of what you can expect when you use the NHS in Scotland, together with your rights and responsibilities.
- The series of **Your health, your rights** factsheets explain what the rights and responsibilities included in the Charter mean for you:
 - **Access:** your rights when accessing NHS services in Scotland
 - **Confidentiality:** the right for your personal health information to be kept secure and confidential.
 - **Communication and participation:** the right to be informed, and involved in decisions, about health care and services.
 - **Feedback and complaints:** the right to have a say about your care and have any concerns and complaints dealt with.
 - **Respect:** the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
 - **Hospital waiting times:** how quickly you should receive hospital care.

For more about health rights see:

- **Consent – it's your decision** explains how you should be involved in decisions about your health care and treatment.
- **How to see your health records** explains your right to see or have a copy of your health record.
- **Health care for overseas visitors** is a set of factsheets explaining what NHS services overseas visitors can expect to receive while they are in Scotland.

Information for young people

- **Consent – your rights** explains how you should be involved in decisions about your health care and treatment.
- **Have your say! Your right to be heard** tells you how to give feedback or make a complaint about the NHS.
- **Confidentiality – your rights** tells you how the health service keeps information about you private.

Information for carers

- **Caring and consent** explains your right to be involved in decisions about the health care of the adult you care for.

Information about health services

- The leaflet **it's okay to ask** gives useful tips and questions you can ask during your health care appointments.
- **New medicines in Scotland – who decides what the NHS can provide?** describes the process medicines go through before NHS doctors in Scotland can routinely prescribe them.
- To **apply for an EHIC card** go to the **Travel health** section of the NHS inform website (www.nhsinform.co.uk) or call the automated service on **0845 606 2030**.

Information about standards

- The Healthcare Environment Inspectorate (HEI) is part of Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS). HIS has been set up to improve the quality of care provided by the NHS. You can see reports of any HEI inspections or reviews of services that take place. HIS can give you information about the standards that the NHS is expected to meet.
- You can contact **Healthcare Improvement Scotland** at:
Gyle Square, 1 South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh EH12 9EB
Phone **0131 275 6000**
Email safeandclean.his@nhs.net
Website www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org

We have tried our best to make sure that the information in this factsheet is correct. However, this factsheet is for information only and is not part of The Charter of Patient Rights and Responsibilities. It is for guidance only so you should not rely on it as a complete statement of the law.

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