



Basildon and Brentwood
Clinical Commissioning Group



Thurrock
Clinical Commissioning Group

PRESCRIBING AND IMMUNISATION ADVICE AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PEOPLE INTENDING TO TRAVEL ABROAD

Introduction

This document provides advice and recommendations for prescribing emergency or routine repeat medication and vaccinations for people travelling abroad. It is aimed at all contractors and providers of NHS services within Thurrock CCG and Basildon & Brentwood CCG.

NHS patients travelling abroad

When a patient travels abroad, provision of medicines for the treatment of existing long term conditions may be provided at NHS expense for up to 3 months. If a patient is travelling abroad for longer than 3 months they are expected to arrange for an alternative supply of medicine at their destination.

When doctors prescribe a drug, they are clinically and legally responsible for any results of that decision to prescribe. In view of this, it would not be considered good clinical practice for a doctor to prescribe large amounts of repeat medication to a patient going abroad for an extended period of time, since the prescriber will not be able to monitor the patient.

It may be helpful for the practice to provide the patient with a list of current medications and a summary of the patient's relevant medical history.

GMS regulations state that patients should be removed from the practice list where notification has been received that the patient intends to be outside of the UK for more than 3 months. Deregistration should occur from either the date of departure or the date upon which the NHS England Area Team receives the notification of departure – whichever is later.

For travel within Europe, patients should be advised to carry a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) at all times to entitle them to receive reduced cost or free medical treatment. Patients should be advised to check specific entitlements prior to travel.

Travel medication and emergency “just in case” medication

The National Health Service (NHS); GMS Regulations 2004 also states that “NHS patients can be charged for prescribing or providing drugs, medicines or appliances (including a collection of such drugs, medicines or appliances in the form of a travel kit) which a patient requires to have in his possession solely in anticipation of the onset of an ailment or occurrence of an injury while he is outside the United Kingdom, but for which he is not requiring treatment when the medicine is prescribed”. Such emergency travel medications are therefore not to be prescribed on the NHS.

GPs are therefore not required to provide prescriptions for medication which is requested solely in anticipation of the onset of an ailment whilst outside the UK, but for which treatment is not required at the time of prescribing (e.g. travel sickness, diarrhoea). Requests for prescription only medicines that are required for travel ‘just in case’ of illnesses contracted, for example antibiotics or oral rehydration sachets, should be treated as a private transaction. The practice may charge for the provision of a private prescription.

Patients should be advised to purchase these items locally prior to travel; advice is available from community pharmacists if required. For conditions unresponsive to self-medication, the patient should normally seek medical attention abroad.

Medication such as norethisterone (and medroxyprogesterone acetate) for postponement of menstruation whilst abroad, are not recommended locally for prescribing on the NHS and patients may be offered a private prescription. The practice cannot charge the patient for the provision of the private prescription.

Malaria Prophylaxis

Malaria prophylaxis medicines are not available at NHS expense. Patients should be advised that chloroquine and proguanil are available to be purchased over the counter from community pharmacies. If a prescription only medicine (POM) is required for malaria prophylaxis then these should be prescribed privately and the practice may charge for the provision of the private prescription. The importance of mosquito nets, suitable clothing and insect repellents to protect against being bitten should be stressed.

Further information regarding malaria prophylaxis (including children's dosing) and vaccine requirements please refer to a professional travel website such as Travel Health Pro (<https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/>) or TRAVAX (<http://www.travax.nhs.uk/>).

Travel vaccines

The British Medical Association (BMA) has provided guidance on the current regulations for travel vaccines and the responsibility of its members in providing travel care services for their patients & clients (<https://www.bma.org.uk/advice/employment/gp-practices/travel-immunisation>)

There are three categories of travel immunisations:

- Those that must always be given as part of NHS provision through GMS Additional Services
- Those that cannot be given as an NHS service
- Those that can be given as a private service

Vaccinations available at NHS expense

Some travel vaccines are available at NHS expense and patients must not be charged a fee for these:

- Hepatitis A
- Typhoid
- Combined hepatitis A and typhoid
- Tetanus, diphtheria and polio
- Cholera

These are available via two different routes:

- The vaccine is purchased by the practice, administered at the practice and a 'personally administered' payment is claimed via NHSBSA; OR
- The vaccine is prescribed on FP10 for the patient to collect from a community pharmacy then the patient brings the vaccine to the practice for administration. Note: the patient will have to pay the usual prescription charge at the pharmacy unless they are exempt. The practice must not claim for 'personal administration' in this situation

Vaccinations not available at NHS expense

The following travel vaccines are not available at NHS expense:

- Hepatitis B
- Meningitis ACWY
- Yellow Fever
- Japanese B encephalitis
- Tick borne encephalitis
- Rabies
- Combined hepatitis A and B (please refer to local policy statement-Appendix 1)

Charges for private provision:

For travel vaccines not available on the NHS the practice may charge for:

- The vaccine (for stock purchased and held by the practice)
- Administration of the vaccine
- Private prescription writing (if a private prescription is provided to obtain the vaccine)

The level of charges should be determined by the practice. It may be advisable to develop a practice a practice protocol which is available to patients, for example, in the form of a leaflet or as a section on the practice website.

Patients should be advised to compare prices as there may be variation in the amount that individual pharmacies will charge to supply the vaccination. Alternatively, practices may choose to buy in the vaccine directly and charge patients for the cost of the vaccine.

Taking Controlled Drugs Abroad

- Department of Health (DH) guidance recommends that, in general prescriptions for controlled drugs should be limited to a supply of up to 30 days treatment.
- Exceptionally (to cover a justifiable clinical need and after consideration of any risk) a prescription can be issued for a longer period, but reasons should be recorded in the patients notes.
- A home office licence to travel into or out of the UK with less than 3 months prescription is not required, but it is advised that a letter is obtained from the prescribing doctor confirming the following details
 - a) carriers name, address and date of birth and also destination,
 - b) dates of outward and return travel,
 - c) country the patient is visiting
 - d) list of drugs the patient will be carrying, including dosages and total amounts
- There is no allowance in the GMS contract to reimburse GPs for providing this service. It is at the discretion of the practice whether they charge the patient for this service.
- Persons travelling abroad (or visitors travelling to the UK) in excess of three months and carrying controlled drugs will require a personal export or import licence (see below).
- Additionally, it is always advisable to contact the Embassy, consulate or High Commission of the country to be visited regarding their policy on the import of controlled drugs, as the legal status of controlled drugs varies between countries.

Personal import or export licences

A personal import or export licence is required for patients with controlled drugs who are travelling for 3 calendar months or are carrying more than 3 months' supply. The application form for the personal export license can be downloaded from: www.gov.uk/government/publications/personal-import-export-licence-application-form

This form can be completed by the patient but must be accompanied by a letter from the prescribing doctor or drug worker which details the information specified above. The application needs to be submitted at least 10 working days in advance of the date of travel.

The personal licence has no legal standing outside of the UK and is intended to assist travellers passing through UK Customs with their prescribed controlled drugs.

Position Statement No.	36
Title	Prescribing and immunisation advice and recommendations for people intending to travel abroad
References	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Prescribing and immunisation policy for people intending to travel abroad; Greenwich CCG February 2016 2) Position Statement on the provision of Travel Vaccines and Malaria Prophylaxis on the NHS in Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG. January 2015 3) Position statement on the Supply of Travel Vaccines on the NHS, East Kent Prescribing Group. February 2015 4) Herts Valley CCG Travel Vaccines Policy 5) The General Practitioners Committee's (GPC) 'Information and Guidance on prescribing in General Practice', September 2004 6) The General Practitioners Committee (GPC)'Prescribing in General Practice', 2015 7) NHS England Standard General Medical Service Contract 2015-16. July 2015. https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2015/06/gms-2015-16.pdf 8) BMA. Focus on Hepatitis B. Available at http://www.bma.org.uk/support-at-work/gp-practices/focus-hepatitis-b-immunisations 9) Prescribing and immunisation policy for people intending to travel abroad; Greenwich CCG February 2016 10) Position Statement on the provision of Travel Vaccines and Malaria Prophylaxis on the NHS in Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG. January 2015 11) Position statement on the Supply of Travel Vaccines on the NHS, East Kent Prescribing Group. February 2015 12) Herts Valley CCG Travel Vaccines Policy 13) The General Practitioners Committee's (GPC) 'Information and Guidance on prescribing in General Practice', September 2004 14) The General Practitioners Committee (GPC)'Prescribing in General Practice', 2015 15) NHS England Standard General Medical Service Contract 2015-16. July 2015. https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2015/06/gms-2015-16.pdf 16) BMA. Focus on Hepatitis B. Available at http://www.bma.org.uk/support-at-work/gp-practices/focus-hepatitis-b-immunisations 17) NHS Choices: Can I take my Medicines Abroad? (accessed 14/7/16) http://www.nhs.uk/chq/Pages/1074.aspx?CategoryID=70&SubCategoryID=175
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Appendix 1

Prescribing of hepatitis B (single agent) and combined Hepatitis A & B is not supported by BBCCG & TCCG for patients travelling abroad

NHS patients are entitled to receive free advice on travel vaccinations and malaria prophylaxis, however only some vaccinations required for travel are available on the NHS.

Hepatitis B is not currently part of the national immunisation schedule in the UK and hepatitis B vaccine is not commissioned by the NHS as a travel vaccine. It is therefore not prescribable as part of the NHS services and is not remunerated by the NHS as part of additional services provided by GPs.

BBCCG & TCCG recommends that, hepatitis B vaccine should not be prescribed on FP10 prescription for travel purposes.

If patients are travelling to an area where hepatitis B is endemic and they are considered to be at HIGH RISK of contracting hepatitis B, they should be strongly encouraged to consider vaccination but this should be provided **privately**.

Combined hepatitis A and B vaccine is not commissioned by the NHS as a travel vaccine; it is therefore not to be provided for travel as an NHS service. Hepatitis A is commissioned by the NHS as a travel vaccine. The combined hepatitis A & B vaccine is prescribable on the NHS because it contains hepatitis A. However, because hepatitis B is not commissioned for travel, BBCCG & TCCG do not support the prescribing of this combination product for travel purposes.

BBCCG & TCCG recommends that hepatitis A single vaccine can be provided on the NHS, with hepatitis B being funded privately for patients requiring both vaccines for travel purposes

Patients with additional lifestyle risk or medical indication are entitled to NHS provision of Hepatitis B whether or not they are travelling. In these circumstances, Hepatitis B should be given as part of their general medical care on the NHS.