

## Guidance on Prescribing of Medicines for Patients who are travelling abroad

If you need regular medication for a stable long-term health condition, your GP may prescribe a maximum of three months' supply if you are going abroad.

The length of treatment that your GP will prescribe depends on what they consider is suitable. This may depend on how long your GP thinks you'll continue to need your medication or how often your treatment needs to be reviewed. Less than three months' supply may be clinically appropriate.

If you are going abroad for longer than three months, you may need to register with a local doctor to obtain medication whilst abroad. Some medications may also be available from a pharmacist abroad.

Note, in addition, that your GP is not responsible for prescribing medication required for conditions which may arise while travelling e.g. diarrhoea medicine, travel sickness, diazepam for anxious flyers.

The National Health Service (General Medical Services Contracts) Regulations 2004, states that a person who leaves the UK with the intention of being away for a period of at least three months is removed from the doctor's list and, as a consequence, ceases to be eligible for NHS treatment.

The General Practitioners Committee Guidance on Prescribing in General Practice 2013 states that the NHS accepts responsibility for supplying ongoing medication for temporary periods abroad of up to 3 months. This is for pre-existing medical conditions, for which treatment is being provided prior to the date of travel. If a person is going to be abroad for more than three months then all that the patient is entitled to at NHS expense is a sufficient supply of his/her regular medication to get to the destination and find an alternative supply of that medication.

The National Health Service (General Medical Services Contracts) Regulations 2004 also state 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 (schedule 5 regulation 24).

The Department of Health does not specify the period for which prescriptions may be issued; as that decision is best made by the patient's GP, taking into account his or her detailed knowledge of the patient's medical history and current medical condition.

The NHS accepts responsibility for supplying ongoing medication for temporary periods of up to 3 months. There is no explicit time limit on prescriptions for patients travelling abroad but as patients would normally be removed from a GPs list if absent for 3 months or more it is expected that prescriptions would not exceed 3 months. Less medication may be prescribed depending on the GPs clinical judgement because no more medicine than is clinically appropriate should be provided to a patient.

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 drugs to a patient going abroad for an extended period of time, whose progress that GP is not able to monitor.