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Guidance

Healthcare for UK nationals visiting Spain

How to get state healthcare when you're on holiday or travelling to Spain.

Published 31 January 2020

Last updated 28 December 2020 — see all updates

From:

Department of Health and Social Care (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-health-and-social-care>) and Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-development-office>)

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Coronavirus (COVID-19) travel advice

See the latest health advice for UK travellers following the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>).

Sign up for Spain travel advice email alerts. (<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/spain/email-signup>)

This information is about visiting Spain. There's different guidance for healthcare if you're going to live, study or work in Spain (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/healthcare-in-spain-including-the-balearic-and-canary-islands>).

When you travel to Spain you should have either:

- a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)
- a UK Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC)
- travel insurance with appropriate healthcare cover

An EHIC or GHIC is not a replacement for travel insurance. Make sure you have both before you travel.

What EHIC and GHIC covers

An EHIC or GHIC covers state healthcare, not private treatment.

With an EHIC or GHIC you can get medically necessary treatment in Spain on the same basis as a Spanish citizen. This means that you'll get healthcare services for free or at a reduced cost.

An EHIC or GHIC is not a replacement for travel insurance – it does not cover everything, such as mountain rescue or being flown back to the UK (medical repatriation). Make sure you have both before you travel to Spain.

You may need to pay in full for treatment if you do not have an EHIC, GHIC or provisional replacement certificate (PRC).

How to apply

Apply for a GHIC for free on the NHS website. (<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/apply-for-a-free-ehic-european-health-insurance-card/>)

How to use it

Show your EHIC or GHIC when you visit any state hospital or doctor. You cannot use either card for private healthcare.

Find out what an EHIC covers in Spain. (<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1021&langId=en&intPagId=1754>)

Find an English-speaking doctor in Spain. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spain-list-of-medical-facilitiespractitioners>)

If you do not have your EHIC or GHIC with you

You'll need to apply for a Provisional Replacement Certificate (PRC) if you need treatment and do not have your EHIC or GHIC, or your card is lost or stolen abroad.

Call the Overseas Healthcare Services. This is part of the NHS Business Services Authority (BSA).

NHS Overseas Healthcare Services
Telephone: +44 (0)191 218 1999
Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm

Travelling with a health condition

Buy travel insurance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/foreign-travel-insurance>) with healthcare cover for your condition. Your EHIC or GHIC will cover medically necessary treatment.

Read the Money and Pensions Advice Service guidance for buying travel insurance for people with pre-existing medical conditions. (<https://www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk/en/articles/travel-insurance-for-over-65s-and-medical-conditions>)

Bring any documents about your health condition or what medication you're taking.

If you need to have treatment while you're in Spain, you may need to pre-arrange it. For example, if you need oxygen treatment or dialysis.

Speak to your doctor in the UK for advice before you travel.

Getting prescriptions

A UK prescription may not be recognised in Spain. If this is the case you'll need to get a prescription from a Spanish GP.

Prescription medicines are not free in Spain. With an E.H.I.C. you get a reduced rate, but you'll still pay:

- 50% of the prescription price
- 10% of the prescription price if you have a UK State Pension – you may need to show proof that you're a pensioner to pay this rate

These prescription charges are non-refundable.

If you need oxygen therapy during your visit

You can get oxygen therapy with an E.H.I.C. or a GHIC, but you need to arrange this before you travel.

You must send a written request to the Spanish health authority in the area you plan to visit at least one month before you travel.

Find out how to request oxygen therapy in Spain. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/request-oxygen-therapy-while-visiting-spain-template-letter>) This guide includes:

- a letter template in Spanish that you can download and complete
- a list of contact details for Spanish health authorities

Bringing medicine with you

You need a letter to prove your medicine is prescribed to you if it contains a 'controlled drug'. You may need to show this at the border when you're entering or leaving the UK and Spain.

You may also need a licence for controlled drugs if:

- your trip is longer than 3 months
- you're travelling with more than 3 months' supply

Read more about travelling with controlled medicines (<http://www.gov.uk/travelling-controlled-drugs>).

You should also contact your nearest Spanish consulate

(<http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Embajadas/LONDRES/en/Embajada/ServiciosConsulares/Pages/Consulates-in-the-UK.aspx>) before you travel to find out if you need to apply for a Spanish licence.

Travelling to have planned treatment

You cannot use an EHIC or GHIC for non-urgent planned treatment. For example, if you're going abroad to give birth.

Read the NHS guide to going abroad for medical treatment (<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/going-abroad-for-treatment/going-abroad-for-medical-treatment/>).

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Last updated 28 December 2020 + show all updates

1. 28 December 2020

Updated page to reflect that European Health Insurance Cards (EHIC) will continue to be accepted in Spain from 1 January 2021.

2. 9 November 2020

Updated section: 'Using an EHIC from 1 January 2021'. Students and people with a registered S1 can now apply for a new UK European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) that will remain valid from 1 January 2021.

3. 13 March 2020

Link to the latest coronavirus (COVID-19) travel advice added.

4. 31 January 2020

First published.

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Brexit

Check how the new rules affect you (<https://www.gov.uk/transition>)

Related content

- France: Voisins Voices - newsletter for the British community in France (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/voisins-voices-a-newsletter-for-the-british-community-in-france>)
- Healthcare for UK nationals living in Spain (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/healthcare-in-spain-including-the-balearic-and-canary-islands>)
- Spain: register your residency (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/residency-requirements-in-spain>)
- Spain: translators (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spain-list-of-translators-and-interpreters>)
- Healthcare for UK nationals visiting Ireland (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/healthcare-for-uk-nationals-visiting-ireland>)
- Spain travel advice (<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/spain>)

Detailed guidance

- Healthcare for UK nationals living in Spain (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/healthcare-in-spain-including-the-balearic-and-canary-islands>)

Collection

- Healthcare in the EU, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/healthcare-in-the-eu-norway-iceland-liechtenstein-and-switzerland>)

Explore the topic

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