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Guidance

Healthcare for UK nationals visiting the EU

How to get state healthcare when you're on holiday or travelling to a country in the EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland.

Published 28 January 2019

Last updated 31 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>).

This information is about visiting the EU, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland. There's different guidance for healthcare if you're:

- visiting Spain (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/healthcare-for-uk-nationals-visiting-spain>)
- visiting Ireland (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/healthcare-for-uk-nationals-visiting-ireland>)
- going to live, study or work in the EU (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/healthcare-in-the-eu-norway-iceland-liechtenstein-and-switzerland>)

When you travel to an EU country you should have either:

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

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

Each healthcare system is different, and in some countries you'll need to pay to have treatment.

Apply for a GHIC

If you apply for a card now, you'll get the new UK Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) instead of a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC).

They are both valid if you're travelling to an EU country.

If your EHIC is still in date, you do not need to apply for a new GHIC.

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/>)

Visiting Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland

You can use a UK passport to get medically necessary healthcare in Norway.

For most people, UK-issued EHICs are not valid in Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland.

Make sure you take out travel insurance with medical cover for your trip.

You may not have access to free emergency medical treatment and could be charged for your healthcare if you do not get health cover with your travel insurance.

Visits that started in 2020 and end in 2021

If you were visiting Iceland, Liechtenstein or Switzerland over the Christmas and New Year period, your UK EHIC entitlements will continue until you leave that country.

Who can use a UK-issued EHIC

Some people can get a new UK-issued EHIC which is valid for visits to Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland.

You'll be able to apply if you're:

- an EU, Norwegian, Icelandic, Liechtenstein or Swiss national, and have been living in the UK since before 1 January 2021
- receiving a UK State Pension or some other 'exportable benefits', and have been living in the EU, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein or Switzerland since before 1 January 2021
- a 'frontier worker' (someone who works in one state and lives in another), and have been one since before 1 January 2021, for as long as you continue to be a frontier worker in the host state
- an eligible family member or dependant of one of the above

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

UK students using an **EHIC**

If you're studying in Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein or Switzerland, and you've been there since before 1 January 2021, you need to apply for a new UK-issued **EHIC** (<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/apply-for-a-free-ehic-european-health-insurance-card/>).

This entitles you to medically necessary state healthcare until the end of your course.

Using your **EHIC** or **GHIC**

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

With an **EHIC** or **GHIC** you can get emergency or necessary medical care for the same cost as a resident in the country you're visiting. This means that you can get healthcare at a reduced cost or for free.

Find out what your card covers in each country (<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1021&langId=en>). You can select the country you are planning to visit from the drop-down list.

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.

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

The following European countries do not accept the **EHIC** or **GHIC**:

- the Channel Islands, including Guernsey, Alderney and Sark
- the Isle of Man
- Monaco
- San Marino
- the Vatican

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 you do not have your card, or your **EHIC** 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 E.H.I.C. 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>).

If you need to have treatment while you're abroad, you may need to pre-arrange it. For example, if you need dialysis or oxygen treatment. Speak to your doctor in the UK for advice before you travel.

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.

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>).

Travelling to have planned treatment

You cannot use an E.H.I.C. or GHIC for 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/>).

Published 28 January 2019

Last updated 31 December 2020 + show all updates

1. 31 December 2020

Added application link for UK Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC). European Health Insurance Cards (EHICs) are still valid for travel to EU countries.

2. 28 December 2020

Updated page to reflect that UK-issued European Health Insurance Cards (EHIC) will still be accepted in EU countries, with different guidance for people travelling to Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland from 1 January 2021.

3. 23 December 2020

Updated: 'Using an EHIC from 1 January 2021' section. EU nationals living in the UK can now apply for a new UK-issued EHIC valid from 1 January 2021.

4. 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.

5. 13 March 2020

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

6. 23 September 2019

Added new section on how to get help paying for treatment after Brexit, and update on student EHICs.

7. 13 September 2019

Added link to Foreign Office travel insurance guidance in the travel insurance section.

8. 28 August 2019

Increased visibility of calls to actions. Highlighted the guidance on what to do to prepare for Brexit, agreements with EFTA countries (Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland) and studying in the EU.

9. 19 March 2019

Updated guidance on buying travel insurance.

10. 28 January 2019

First published.

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Brexit

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

Related content

- Healthcare in the EU, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/healthcare-in-the-eu-norway-iceland-liechtenstein-and-switzerland>)
- Using the NHS when you return to live in the UK (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/using-the-nhs-when-you-return-to-live-in-the-uk>)
- Living in Europe (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/living-in-europe>)
- Healthcare for UK nationals living in Sweden (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/healthcare-in-sweden>)
- Healthcare for UK nationals living in Germany (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/healthcare-in-germany>)

Detailed guidance

- Healthcare for UK nationals living in Austria (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/healthcare-in-austria>)
- Healthcare for UK nationals living in Portugal (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/healthcare-in-portugal-including-madeira>)

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>)
- Switzerland: arrangements from 1 January 2021 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/eu-exit-transition-switzerland>)
- Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein: arrangements from 1 January 2021 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/eu-exit-transition-norway-iceland-and-liechtenstein>)

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