

Help with travel costs

Did you know that you might be able to claim help with your travel costs through the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme?

What is the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme?

The Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme (HTCS) is a Department of Health scheme which allows patients on a low income or specific benefits to claim their travel costs to hospital.

Information or advice

P.A.L.S.
Patient Advice and Liaison Service

Gloucestershire Hospitals (for Gloucestershire Royal and Cheltenham General)	0800 019 3282
Gloucestershire Care Services (for Community Hospitals)	0300 421 8313
2gether Trust	01452 894072
Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)	0800 0151 548

Who can claim a refund?

This scheme is for people who are not eligible for non-emergency patient transport, cannot get a friend or relative to take them and who need help to meet the cost of travelling to hospital or other NHS premises.

The rules for deciding who can claim refunds for travel to hospital can seem complicated. The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) or the General Office at the hospital, or the Citizens Advice Bureau, will be able to help you decide whether you are eligible and can help you fill in the forms.

Refunds are only available for people who have been referred by a GP, dentist, or ophthalmic practitioner or who are already under the care of a consultant.

If you or your partner (including Civil Partner) is receiving any of the following benefits at the time of your appointment you qualify for a full or part refund of necessary travel costs:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Pension Guarantee Credit or
- you are named on, or entitled to, a NHS tax credit exemption certificate or
- you have a low income and are named on a current HC2 or HC3 certificate. To apply for this certificate, you should complete form HC1 available from your local hospital, Jobcentre Plus offices, or from the Department of Health publications order line on 0300 123 1002, or
- you receive Universal Credit and meet the criteria.

For a full list of people who can get help with travel costs for NHS treatment, see the Department of Health leaflet HC11 Help with health costs at: www.nhsba.nhs.uk.

What will be paid?

If you qualify, you will be entitled to a full or partial refund of **necessary** travel costs equivalent to the **cheapest** reasonable method of travel.

Public Transport	This will be calculated on the cheapest form of public transport available, including concessionary and promotional fares.
Private Car	This is based on a rate of 15p per mile from and to the patient's home postcode. RAC Route Planner is used to determine the shortest mileage. Tolls and unavoidable car parking charges may also be refunded. No fixed penalty or other penalties incurred in the journey are payable.
Voluntary Car Service	Reimbursement for patient travel only (not any additional charge made by the operator). Reimbursed at a rate of 45p per mile. RAC Route Planner is used to determine the shortest mileage.
Taxi	As a rule taxi fares will not be refunded unless agreed in advance (contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) for advice). Without prior approval or a form signed by a clinician, reimbursement will be made at the private car rate and you will be required to make up the difference.

How do I make a claim?

You will need to complete form HC5(T). You may also need to complete an HC1 depending on which benefit you claim. These forms are available from outside the General Office at the hospital or can be requested via the NHS Choices website.

Payment cannot be made without submission of all the relevant documents and in addition to the above form you will need to include the following documents:

Your hospital appointment letter (or other written evidence that you have attended your appointment or treatment).

Travel receipts or tickets and any parking receipts. All receipts must provide proof of date of travel and amount of each individual ticket cost.

A taxi or an escort must be authorised in advance and signed form HTCS2 (taxi form) or HTCS3 (escort form) will also be needed.

The documents should be sent to the address on the form. The NHS Business Services Authority will confirm if your claim is valid and return the form to the hospital you attended. The hospital will arrange payment by cheque or direct to your bank account if you have completed a BACS form and included this with your first claim. BACS forms are available from the General Office at the hospital.

Occasionally the form will be sent back to the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) who will arrange payment.

Is there a time limit?

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, claims must be made within three months of the appointment or admission.

How long will it take to get my refund?

Claims may take a few weeks to process and we suggest that you complete and return the form to the relevant address as soon as possible after your appointment to avoid delay. If you don't include the relevant documents this could hold up your claim.

What should I do if I haven't got enough money to get to hospital?

If you are suffering financial hardship and cannot afford your journey into hospital then it is important that you speak to someone in the PALS or General Office as soon as you get your appointment. They will be able to discuss options with you and it might be possible to arrange an advance payment. You will still need to complete a HC5(T) Form so that eligibility can be checked and if you have wrongly claimed for help with travel costs you may face penalty charges.

Can I claim if I am visiting a patient in hospital?

No. The HTCS does not cover visitors, but you may be able to apply for a loan or grant from the social fund through your local Jobcentre Plus office.

Can I claim for someone to go with me?

Only if your doctor, dentist or consultant says that for medical reasons you need someone to travel with you and this has been agreed in advance, or if a child of 16 or under is being accompanied by a parent or guardian. You will need to complete form HTCS3, get it signed by a clinician and include it with your claim. Refunds for escorts cannot be claimed if the journey is made by car or taxi. Form HTCS3 is available from the General Office in the hospital or can be downloaded from the hospital or CCG website.

Can I claim to travel to or from A&E?

You are entitled to claim if you had to attend A&E for a condition that you are already being treated for in the hospital outpatient department but this has to be for a pre-existing condition. If you have had to attend A&E for any other reason then you are not eligible to claim.

Can I claim if I am receiving NHS treatment at a private or independent hospital or treatment centre?

Yes, if you are receiving NHS funded treatment. Claims must be made using an HC5(T) refund claim form and payment will be made by the Clinical Commissioning Group.

Can I claim taxi fares?

Taxi fares are reimbursed only in **exceptional** circumstances. Prior approval must be given or a clinician must confirm that a taxi was considered medically necessary for a particular journey. You will need to complete form HTCS2, get it signed by a clinician and include

it with your claim. Without prior approval or a signed form, reimbursement will be made at the private car allowance rate and you will need to make up the difference. We recommend that you contact the PALS or General Office before your appointment and before you travel. Form HTCS2 is available from the General Office at the hospital or can be downloaded from the hospital or CCG websites.

Can I claim for a journey with a Voluntary Driver or Community Transport?

Yes. You will need to provide a receipt from the driver. We will calculate the mileage in the same way as private car drivers, from the patient's postcode to the hospital postcode (not from the driver's postcode). We pay a higher rate than that for patients driving their own car but the voluntary drivers may charge a different rate which may require you to make up the difference.

Are there other circumstances where the HTCS does not apply?

Yes

- Patients attending an establishment for primary medical or primary dental services
- Patients attending routine screening unless this is in relation to ongoing treatment under a consultant
- Transport of patients with a medical need for ambulance transport
- Patients being transferred between treatment centres
- Patients who discharge themselves from hospital at their own request
- Private patients
- Overnight stay costs or treatment costs.

How can I get further information?

- ✓ Any one of the countywide PALS offices
- ✓ The General Office at any of the hospitals
- ✓ Visit the NHS Choices website www.nhs.uk
- ✓ Ring an NHS travel costs advisor on 0300 330 1343. This is the number on the HC5(T) which offers to help people with making a claim.

What should I do if I am not happy with a decision that has been made about my claim?

Please contact the relevant Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). Details of these services are listed on the front cover.

Fraud

We reserve the right to refuse payment in circumstances when eligibility has not been satisfactorily established or where claims appear excessive. Any fraud committed under this scheme, including duplicate claims, will be reported to our local Counter Fraud Specialist and your benefit agency.

To discuss receiving this information in other formats please contact

জন্য দয়া করে যোগাযোগ করুন
এই তথ্য অন্য ফর্মাটে পেতে আলোচনার

如需以其他格式接收此信息，请联系

V případě, že potřebujete obdržet tuto
informaci v jiném formátu, kontaktujte prosím

ચર્ચા કરવામાટે કૃપાકરી સંપર્ક કરો
આ માહિતી બીજા ફોર્મેટમાં મળવાની

Aby uzyskać te informacje w innych
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По вопросам получения информации
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Ak si želáte získať túto informáciu v
inom formáte, kontaktujte prosím

0800 015 1548