

NHS services for older people



Who we are

Age Scotland is the national charity for older people. We work to improve the lives of everyone over the age of 50 so that they can love later life.

Our vision is a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older.

Our mission is to inspire, involve and empower older people in Scotland, and influence others, so that people can make the most of later life.

Our three strategic aims are to:



Help older people to be as well as they can be



Promote a positive view of ageing and later life



Tackle loneliness and isolation

How we can help

We know that growing older doesn't come with a manual. Later life can bring changes and opportunities to your life and you may need to know about rights, organisations and services which are unfamiliar to you.

That's why we provide free information and advice to help you on a range of topics including benefits and entitlements, social care, legal issues such as Power of Attorney, housing and much more. All of our guides are available to download for free from our website, or you can contact our helpline team to have copies posted to you for free.

The Age Scotland **helpline** is a free, confidential phone service for older people, their carers and families in Scotland looking for information and advice.

Later life can bring times when you just need someone to talk to. Our **friendship line** is part of our wider helpline and older people can call us for a chat. We're here to listen, provide friendship and offer support.

For information, advice and friendship



Call us free on: 0800 12 44 222
(Monday – Friday, 9am - 5pm)



Visit [agescotland.org.uk](https://www.agescotland.org.uk)
to find out more.

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Your rights and responsibilities as an NHS patient

Your rights using NHS services in Scotland are set out in a charter of patient's rights and responsibilities which is available from NHS Inform www.nhsinform.scot. If you have questions about your rights and do not have internet access you can call **NHS Inform** on **0800 22 44 88**.

The charter looks at:

- **Accessing and using NHS services in Scotland:** your rights when using NHS health services
- **Communication and involving you:** your rights to be informed about your healthcare and services and to be involved in decisions about them
- **Privacy and confidentiality:** your rights to privacy and to have your personal health information protected
- **Feedback, complaints and my rights:** your rights to have a say about your treatment or care and to have any concerns and complaints dealt with.



Who can help?

When you feel unwell you may need help from your GP but other services could help too including your pharmacist, NHS Inform, or a minor injuries unit.

Pharmacists

Pharmacists can give advice if you have a sore throat, cold or aches and pains. They can recommend non-prescription medicines, and advise you if you need to see a doctor. Pharmacists can answer questions about medication you have been prescribed and non-prescription remedies you want to buy, as well as how different medicines may affect each other.

The **NHS Pharmacy First** service enables pharmacists to provide free treatment for some minor illnesses and conditions to people who are registered with a GP in Scotland.

You need to register at a community pharmacy, then the pharmacist can provide advice, and approved free treatment for conditions including eye and ear problems, constipation, allergies, coughs and some infections and joint problems. They can also refer you to your GP.

Prescriptions are free in Scotland. Most pharmacies will deliver your prescription to you if you cannot collect it yourself but some may charge for this.

If you find it difficult to manage your medication, ask your pharmacist for advice. They may be able to make up a special pack called a blister pack with each dose clearly marked with the time when it should be taken. This is also useful for any carers who support you to take medication.

You may be able to request a repeat prescription online through your GP surgery or pharmacy. You can find your nearest pharmacy by calling **NHS inform** on **0800 22 44 88** or by visiting the website **www.nhsinform.scot/national-service-directory**.

NHS 24 and NHS Inform

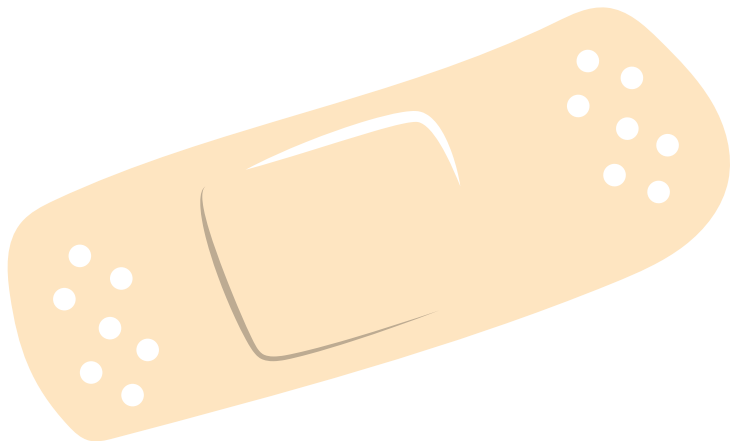
NHS 24 is a national, confidential, freephone 24-hour telephone line for Scotland; their telephone number is **111**. The service is staffed by health professionals and can provide urgent health advice out of hours when your GP practice or dentist is closed. In an emergency they can connect you to your local Accident and Emergency services or the Scottish Ambulance service. You can find more information on their website **www.nhs24.scot**.

NHS Inform can provide information about health issues and services and about your rights and responsibilities when using the NHS. Information is available on their website **www.nhsinform.scot** or you can call them on **0800 22 44 88**.

Minor injuries units

Minor injuries units are for patients with non-life-threatening injuries. They are often based in hospitals and can treat broken bones, minor burns, head and eye injuries, and insect and animal bites. They can arrange for you to be transferred for specialist help if they find a more serious problem.

You can find your nearest unit by calling **NHS Inform** on **0800 22 44 88** or find information on the Scotland's service directory section of their website **www.nhsinform.scot**.





General Practitioner (GP)

GP practices offer a range of services to prevent and treat illnesses and support people with long-term physical and mental health conditions. GPs act as a gateway to health services in the community and can refer you to hospital or for other specialist treatment.

Most people register with a GP based in the GP practice nearest to their home; if you want to choose a doctor based further away you will need to check if they will accept you as a patient as they may sometimes need to visit you at home. Many GP appointments are now carried out by phone with follow up face to face appointments if needed.

If a GP does not accept you as a patient they must have reasonable grounds for refusing such as the practice register is already full. If you are choosing a GP you may want to consider:

- the availability of male and female GPs and nurses
- if there are staff who speak your preferred language
- how the appointment system works
- what the opening hours are
- whether you can book appointments online
- the availability of parking spaces nearby.

If you want to change your GP you can ask another to accept you as a patient; the new practice will contact your previous GP for your medical records.

If you will be living away from home for up to three months, you can apply to be a temporary resident patient with a local GP.

If you become ill while staying away from home, call NHS 24 for advice.

Hospitals

For information about hospital treatment see the Age Scotland guide **Your hospital stay**.



Keeping well

The NHS provides services that can help you to stay well:

Seasonal flu jab

For winter 2023/2024 you are entitled to a free flu vaccination if you are age 50 or over. Many younger people will qualify too because of their job or a health condition. You will receive a letter offering you an appointment or telling you how you can arrange an appointment.

More information is available at

www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/immunisation

or you can call **NHS Inform** on **0800 22 44 88**.

Pneumonia (pneumococcal) vaccination

You are entitled to a pneumonia vaccination if you are 65 or over, or are under 65 but have a condition which puts you at increased risk from pneumonia. This vaccine can be given at any time of year but may be offered at the same time as the seasonal flu jab.

More information is available at

www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/immunisation

or you can call **NHS Inform** on **0800 22 44 88**.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination

For winter 2023/2024 you are eligible for a COVID-19 vaccination if you are age 65 or over. Many younger people will qualify too because of their circumstances or a health condition. You will receive a letter offering you an appointment or telling you how you can arrange an appointment.

You can find information at **www.nhsinform.scot/covid-19-vaccine/** or you can call **NHS Inform** on **0800 22 44 88**.



Looking after your feet

If you have problems looking after your feet you are likely to have to pay for chiropody or podiatry services. You may receive free care if you are referred to a service by your doctor or another health professional because of particular health issues such as diabetes. Chiropody and podiatry services vary in different health board areas.

Personal foot care (nail cutting) is not the responsibility of the NHS. In some areas voluntary organisations offer toenail cutting, there may be a small charge for this service. For more information about services available in your area call **NHS Inform** on **0800 22 44 88** or the Age Scotland helpline on **0800 12 44 222**.

NHS eye tests

A free NHS eye test tests your sight, checks the health of your eyes and looks for signs of other health problems that could be spotted before they become more serious.

You can have a free NHS eye test every year if you are under 16 or over 60, or every two years if you are between 16 and 59. Tests can be more frequent if you have a family history of eye problems such as glaucoma.

You will have to pay for frames and lenses unless you qualify for help because you have a low income, but you do not have to buy them from the optician who examined your eyes. You can ask for your prescription and buy the frames and lenses from another optician.

The **Royal National Institute for the Blind** provides expert information about vision. See their website **www.rnib.org.uk/scotland** or call **0303 123 9999**.

NHS Hearing tests

If you are concerned about your hearing, your GP can refer you for a free hearing test at an audiology department in a local NHS hospital or you could contact a private supplier.

An NHS hearing aid is free and can be repaired free of charge.

If you buy a hearing aid privately you cannot ask the NHS to repair it for you.

For more information about help with hearing problems and an online hearing test you can contact **RNID Scotland** at <https://rnid.org.uk/about-us/rnid-in-scotland/> or call **0808 808 0123**.

NHS Dental care

Most dentists provide NHS treatment but some only offer private care. To find an NHS dentist call **NHS Inform** on **0800 22 44 88** or see their website www.nhsinform.scot. You are usually entitled to a free NHS dental examination every 6 months.

If you need treatment after a check-up you will normally be given a treatment plan and be told how much the work will cost; for NHS patients the standard costs are set by the Scottish Government.

You may be eligible for help with the costs of your dental treatment; see the information on Help with Health Costs on page 11.

Shingles vaccination

People aged 65 or 70 on September 1st 2023, and those aged 71 to 79, are eligible for a free shingles vaccine. Shingles is caused by the same virus as chicken pox. When you recover from chickenpox some of the virus survives and may become active later on, especially if your immune system has been weakened by age, stress or illness.

See www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/immunisation/vaccines/shingles-vaccine or call NHS Inform on **0800 22 44 88**.

NHS Mental health support

Your GP is a good person to talk to if you are worried about your mental health as they can talk to you about treatments and about the support available locally.

NHS Inform has information about common mental health problems and the treatments available at www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/mental-health.

Age Scotland's mental health guides **Keeping well and who and help** and **Guide for carers** provide information about looking after your own mental health and supporting someone else.

The **NHS Breathing Space** service operates a confidential phone line for anyone in Scotland feeling low, anxious or depressed.

Weekdays: Monday to Thursday 6pm to 2am

Weekend: Friday 6pm to Monday 6am

Tel **0800 83 85 87** / www.breathingspace.scot.

NHS Continence services

If you have problems controlling your bladder or bowel you should talk to your GP who can give you advice and may be able to refer you for specialist support. A cure is often possible. For detailed information see our guide **Bladder and Bowel Problems**.

NHS Health screening programmes

NHS Scotland offers a variety of health screening programmes. You can get information on all available screening from **NHS Inform**. Call **0800 22 44 88** or see their website **www.nhsinform.scot**.

Breast cancer screening is offered to women aged 50 to 70 every 3 years. Screening is available after the age of 70 on request.

Cervical cancer screening (smear test) is offered to anyone with a cervix in Scotland between the ages of 25 and 64 every 5 years. Where there is a need for further investigation it can be offered to women up to 70 years of age.

Bowel cancer screening is offered to all men and women between the ages of 50 and 74 every 2 years. You will be sent a test kit in the post which you use then post back to the screening service. If you are 75 or over, you can still take a bowel screening test every two years if you want to. Contact the **Bowel Screening Centre Helpline** on **0800 0121 833**.

Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) testing is offered to all men in Scotland when they are 65. It involves an ultrasound scan of the abdomen.

Diabetic retinopathy screening is offered to people with diabetes every year or two years, depending on their level of risk.

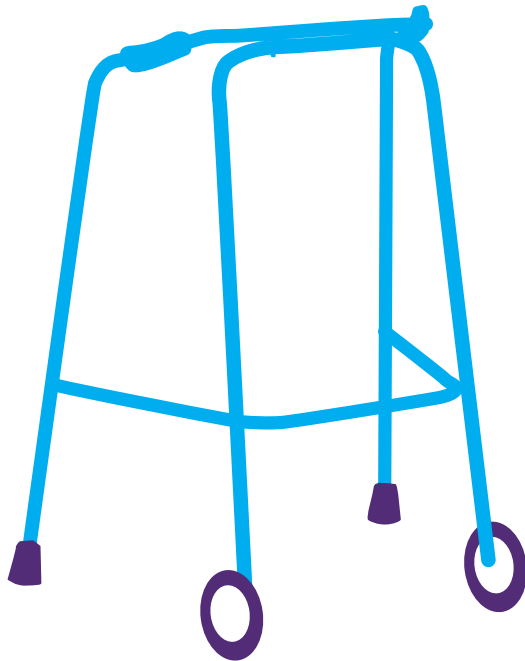


Preventing falls

If you have a fall or start to feel unsteady you should discuss this with your GP, even if you were not injured by the fall and generally feel fine. Your local falls prevention service may offer to visit you to check if you are at risk of falling at home and to give you advice.

Once you have been assessed, you may be entitled to some aids and adaptations, for example, a bath rail or stair rail to reduce your risk of falling at home.

Contact the **Age Scotland** helpline on **0800 12 44 222** for a copy of our guide **Worried about slips, trips and stumbles**.



Help with health costs

Many NHS services are free, but there are costs for items such as glasses, dental treatment, and travel to hospital. You may need to pay for these unless you qualify for help because you have a low income.

You will receive the full amount of help if you receive a means tested benefit such as Guarantee Pension Credit, and you won't need to complete a separate application form.

If you don't receive a qualifying benefit, you may still be eligible for some help with health costs if you have a low income. You need to complete an **HC1** form to apply, available online at **www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/health-rights/access/help-with-health-costs**, and also from pharmacies, GP practices, Citizens Advice or Jobcentre Plus offices.

Your income and capital (and your partner's income and capital, if you have one) are used to work out whether you are eligible for help. You will receive an **HC2** certificate if you qualify for full help or an **HC3** certificate if you qualify for partial help.

If you qualify for help with travel costs, tell the hospital that you want to claim back the cost of your journey and show your HC2 or HC3 certificate and receipts.



Older veterans

If you have served in the Armed Forces and receive a War Pension, you may be entitled to help with health costs for the condition you receive the pension for.

For more information contact **Veterans UK** on **0808 1914 2 18**.

Travelling to appointments

Patient Transport from the Scottish Ambulance Service is available for patients who either

- require assistance from skilled ambulance staff e.g. require access to oxygen whilst travelling
- have a medical condition that would prevent them from travelling to hospital by any other means
- have a medical condition that might put them at risk from harm if they were to travel independently, or
- have treatment with side effects that requires support from skilled ambulance staff.

If you need this help and think you qualify contact the booking line on **0300 123 1236** within 28 days of your appointment.

The person who takes your call will ask for your CHI number, a unique health number which contains your date of birth, but they can arrange transport if you do not know this number. They will ask about the help you need and assess whether you qualify for patient transport.

In some areas volunteer drivers may help with travel to hospital. The drivers will have been carefully vetted by the organisation they volunteer for.

If you have served in the Armed Forces, **Fares4Free** may be able to help you get to your appointment. Contact them through their website **www.fares4free.org** or call **0141 266 6000** for more information.

If you live in the council areas of Highland, Argyll & Bute, Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland, you get help with the cost of travel to hospital for NHS treatment if you have to travel at least 30 miles (48km), or more than 5 miles (8km) by sea, to get to hospital.



Patient Advice and Support Service (PASS)

The Patient Advice and Support Service is an independent service which provides free confidential advice and support to patients, their carers and families in their dealings with the NHS. They can help you to give feedback, make comments, raise concerns or make a complaint about treatment and care provided by the NHS in Scotland.

You can contact the service by:

- phoning **0800 917 2127**
- chatting online at **www.patientadviceScotland.org.uk**
- calling in at any Scottish **Citizens Advice Bureau**

NHS complaints procedure

The NHS has a complaints procedure, but if you think you have had a personal injury because of health treatment you should get legal advice before making a complaint.

You can ask for a copy of the complaints procedure at the practice or hospital where you had treatment.

The stages involve:

- 1 Trying to resolve matters quickly and locally, possibly with the assistance of a mediator.
- 2 If your complaint is not resolved locally you can refer the matter to the **Scottish Public Services Ombudsman**. You can find information about their service at **www.spsso.org.uk** or call them on **0800 377 7330**. It is likely to be some months before they are able to help with your complaint.
- 3 Judicial review may be possible if you are not satisfied with the Ombudsman's decision. This is a complex court process so you would need a solicitor's help to do this and you should get advice about the costs of this legal action.



Further Information

Age Scotland helpline **0800 12 44 222**

The Age Scotland helpline provides information, friendship and advice to older people, their relatives and carers.

If you need an interpreter call **0800 12 44 222** and simply state the language you need e.g. Polish or Urdu. Stay on the line for a few minutes and the Age Scotland helpline will do the rest.

You can call us on **0800 12 44 222** for a copy of our publications list or order your free copies here www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/information-advice/publication-order-form.

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- calling in at any Scottish **Citizens Advice Bureau**.

NHS Inform

For information about health topics.

Helpline **0800 22 44 88**

Textphone **18001 0800 22 44 88**

www.nhsinform.scot

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Please note that the inclusion of named agencies, websites, companies, products, services or publications in this information guide does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement by Age Scotland or any of its subsidiary companies or charities.

How you can help

Our vision is a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older.

All the information and advice we provide is free and completely impartial and in helping people access their rights and entitlements, it can be life changing.

We are an ageing population and more people than ever are coming to us for support. You can help us be there for those that need us most.



Make a donation

No matter how small or large, donations make a massive difference and help us continue our important work.

- ▶ Call **03330 15 14 60**
- ▶ Visit **age.scot/donate**
- ▶ Text **LATERLIFE** to **70085** to donate £5.*



Fundraise

Whether it is having a bake sale, running a marathon or knitting small hats for the Big Knit, there are so many ways to raise vital funds to support our work. To find out more, call **0333 323 2400** or visit **age.scot/fundraise**.



Leave us a gift in your Will

By choosing to leave us a gift in your Will, you can help Age Scotland to continue being there for vulnerable older people in the years to come. To find out more, call **0333 323 2400** or visit **age.scot/legacy**.

* Texts cost £5 plus one standard rate message

Let's keep in touch



Sign up to our newsletter

Our regular newsletters by email contain details of our campaigns, services and how you can support our work.

Sign up today by visiting [**age.scot/roundup**](https://age.scot/roundup)



Follow us on social media

Our social media channels are a great way to keep up to date with our work and issues that affect older people.



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