



A lifetime of specialist care

Reimbursement of travel expenses to and from hospital – a patient's guide

The cost of travel to attend hospital can only be reimbursed if you receive one or more of these benefits:

- pension guarantee credit
- income-based jobseeker's allowance (you or your partner)
- income support (or partner in receipt)
- income-related employment and support allowance (ESA)
- NHS tax exemption card
- low income – HC2 or HC3 certificate
- form HC5 authorised by Patient Services, Prescription Pricing Authority, Newcastle
- universal credit.

Incapacity benefit, contribution-based jobseeker's allowance, contribution-related ESA or disability living allowance do not count, as they are not income-based. If you get pension savings credit only, this does not qualify for help with health costs.

One parent of a child who is under the age of 16 or in full-time education can claim back fares if he/she gets one or more of the benefits listed above. Only one parent can claim for each visit.

Payments are only given for outpatients appointments, or on the days of admission and discharge and must be claimed within three months of the attendance date unless authorised by Patient Services, Newcastle, by using form HC5. No fares can be claimed for visiting a patient, returning medical equipment or collecting medication, even if you get an eligible benefit (listed above).

Eligible expenses

Motor vehicle

Payments can be made at the rate of 12p per mile. The route is worked out using a computer programme that uses the most direct route between the postcodes of your home and the hospital.

Public transport

This covers:

- rail fares from nearest local station
- bus fares, these can be for either the whole journey or as part of a longer journey
- tube fares
- Tramlink and Docklands Light Railway.

You will need to let us have your ticket or at least see it so that we can photocopy it to support your claim. Please do not put your ticket through the automatic machines, tickets can instead be shown to station staff and kept.

Only second class rail fares are reimbursed. If you choose to travel first class or with any other upgrades you will have to pay them yourself.

If you want to claim a journey using an Oyster Card, please get a statement from an Oyster machine showing the journey you have taken – a ‘top-up’ on Oyster is not acceptable.

Taxis

Payments for taxi fares will normally only be allowed if a taxi is needed for a medical reason. This may include the need to transport a wheelchair or carry other aids such as oxygen bottles etc. A letter from your GP will be needed within three months of the appointment date so we can reimburse the fare.

If it is not possible to travel by public transport to reach the hospital at a specified time, a taxi journey is allowed. This includes if there is no public transport eg, bus, to or from your local train station.

This would also be for situations where you have to leave before your local bus service starts to get you to your appointment on time.

Other information

Royal Brompton and Harefield policy is not to pay for car parking. Air fares are not usually paid unless flying is the cheapest form of travel. Hotels and/or other accommodation are not covered.

Procedure

When you come to the hospital, please ask outpatients, ward or department for a claim form. The first section of this must be filled in by Trust staff to confirm your attendance. This form must then be taken to the cashier's office (level 2, Sydney Street, Royal Brompton) or the post room (Harefield Hospital, near reception on the ground floor). Staff will then confirm you qualify for reimbursement of fares by examining and copying all the documentation provided.

The documentation needed is:

- A letter from the benefit office on headed paper, confirming that you get a relevant benefit. The letter must be dated within 12 months of the appointment.
- Original tickets for the journey undertaken.

If you do not have these on the day, no payments can be given at this time, but you can apply by post or email (see page 4). You will need the letter from the benefits office at every appointment, even if your visits are close together.

If someone accompanying you (relative/escort) is also applying for a fare reimbursement:

- there must be a medical need for you to be accompanied
- this must be agreed and signed for by a doctor on the 'Authorisation for reimbursement of fares form'.

Once the form has been authorised by the member of staff:

At Royal Brompton Hospital, the documentation will be given to you and should be taken to the cashier's office in Sydney Street. If you cannot manage the three-minute walk, a shuttle bus service is available between Fulham Road and Sydney Street, or a relative can collect it for you as long as it is arranged in advance with the cashier. You can call the cashier on 020 7352 8121 extension 8438.

At Harefield Hospital, payment will be made by post room staff.

Postal/email applications

If you are applying for a reimbursement by post or email (ie, you have not brought proof of entitlement), you need to send the Trust a complete copy of your benefits letter confirming you qualify, which must be on official headed paper and dated within a 12-month period of the appointment.

You also need to provide original bus, train, tube tickets etc, to support the claim. The claim must be made within three months of the appointment.

If you have a medical need to travel by taxi then an original receipt must be provided along with a letter from your GP.

We suggest you keep a copy of these tickets and documents for your own records in case they get lost in the post. Unfortunately, we cannot refund any travel expenses (or part of) without valid tickets.

If you travelled by car, you will need to send in the letter (showing that you qualify), then mileage will be worked out accordingly using the Trust's computer programme. This will calculate the direct distance in miles. Mileage will only be paid for the time that you are actually in the vehicle. If a driver has to go home and travel in again without you, that journey will not be reimbursed.

Delayed claims

If you do not manage to get your travel expenses claim in on time (within three months of the appointment), you can apply to Patient Services in Newcastle using an HC5 form which is available from the cashier's office at Royal Brompton Hospital and the post room at Harefield Hospital.

Not in receipt of any qualifying benefit

If you have a low income but do not get a benefit listed on the front of this leaflet, you may be able to claim travel expenses by completing an HC1 form. A leaflet entitled 'Help with health costs (HC12)' is available – please ask for a copy at the cashier's office at Royal Brompton Hospital or the post room at Harefield Hospital. You can also call the NHS leaflet order line on 0300 123 0849 to order a copy.

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