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# Welfare and supportive services

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## Welfare and financial services

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It is important to get all the help that you are entitled to. The area of welfare and benefits can sometimes appear quite daunting for people. The following information aims to provide you with useful information and helpful contact information.

### Prescription charges

Patients living in England currently have to pay for prescriptions. Patients living in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales receive free prescriptions. However there are certain medications that are free of charge and patients with certain medical conditions are exempt from paying prescription charges.

You can get free NHS prescriptions if, at the time the prescription is dispensed, you:

- Are 60 or over
- Are under 16
- Are 16-18 and in full-time education
- Are pregnant or have had a baby in the previous 12 months and have a valid maternity exemption certificate (MatEx)
- Have a specified medical condition and have a valid medical exemption certificate (MedEx)
- Have a continuing physical disability that prevents you from going out without help from another person and have a valid MedEx

You are also entitled to free prescriptions if you or your partner (including civil partners) are named on, or are entitled to, an NHS tax credit exemption certificate or a valid HC2 certificate (full help with health costs), or you receive either:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, or
- Pension Credit Guarantee Credit

Medical exemption (MedEx) certificates are issued on application to

people who have:

- A permanent fistula (for example caecostomy, colostomy, laryngostomy or ileostomy) requiring an appliance or continuous surgical dressing
- A form of hypoadrenalism (for example Addison's disease) for which specific substitution therapy is needed
- Diabetes insipidus or other forms of hypopituitarism
- Diabetes mellitus, except where treatment is by diet alone
- Hypoparathyroidism
- Myasthenia gravis
- Myxoedema (hypothyroidism requiring thyroid hormone replacement)
- Epilepsy requiring continuous anticonvulsive therapy
- Continuing physical disability that prevents the person from going out without help from another person. Temporary disabilities do not count even if they last for several months

Having cystinosis does not directly entitle you to free prescriptions. However you can claim for conditions on the list that are caused by cystinosis such as diabetes and hypothyroidism. To apply for a MedEx certificate you will need to complete the FP92A form which is available from your doctor.

Prescription prepayment certificates (PPC) are available to help you save money on your prescription charges. There are two PPC options available:

1. A three month PPC costs £29.10 and will save you money if you need four or more items in the three months
2. A 12 month PPC costs £104.00 and will save you money if you need more than 14 items in a year

For information on prescription charges go to:

**[www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcosts/Pages/Prescriptioncosts.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcosts/Pages/Prescriptioncosts.aspx)**

For information on PPCs and to apply online go to:

**[www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcosts/Pages/PPC.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcosts/Pages/PPC.aspx)**

## Low income scheme

The scheme provides income related help to people who are not exempt from charges but who may be entitled to full or partial help if they have a low income. The scheme covers NHS prescriptions, NHS dental treatment, sight tests, glasses and contact lenses, and travelling to receive NHS treatment.

For application forms further information on the Low Income Scheme visit [www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk).

## Citizens Advice Bureau

The Citizens Advice Bureau aims to provide the advice people need for the problems they face. The benefits advice section at [www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk) provides information on benefits, tax credits, council tax, housing costs, national insurance, and how to appeal or complain about a benefits decision.

## What benefits can I get?

The Department of Work and Pensions has made an online guide which you can use to check what you may be eligible to get. It can also give you an estimate on what you may receive.

You can access the guide at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) in the 'money, tax and benefits' section.

## Useful contacts/further information

### Social worker:

Most hospitals have a social worker who should be able to advise you on any issues about benefits and NHS costs.

### British Kidney Patient Association (BKPA):

The BKPA offers financial assistance to patients at any stage of treatment if kidney disease is having a serious impact on quality of

life and if patients are struggling on a low income. The BKPA can assist with financial aid, travel costs, further education and training, and holidays.

For further information and guidance on how to apply visit **[www.britishkidney-pa.co.uk/grants](http://www.britishkidney-pa.co.uk/grants)**.

### **Kidney Research UK:**

Kidney Research UK awards grants to patients who have unforeseen and additional costs as a direct consequence of their kidney condition. Guidance for applying for a grant is available at **[www.kidneyresearchuk.org/health/financial-help-for-patients.php](http://www.kidneyresearchuk.org/health/financial-help-for-patients.php)**.