

Accessing GP and specialist care

Register with GP

It's important to continue to look after your health if you're moving away from home to attend university. Your GP is the gateway to all the healthcare services you will need in your new town or city. Registering at a medical practice should be one of your top priorities when arriving at university.

Many universities have a health centre on campus which may be convenient but you can register with any local GP. Your university student support services will be able to give you details of the nearest GP. Many universities will provide a form to register at the local student medical practice in your welcome pack. Fill this in and get it to the GP quickly – that way the ball is already rolling and there won't be any delays in getting you set up at your new practice. If you don't receive this form (or you've lost it), don't panic – the student medical practice usually has a stand at the fresher's fair too.

If you register with a new GP at university it may take some time for your records to arrive at your new surgery. Before leaving home, ensure you have at least two months of your prescription items, such as supplies of insulin and testing strips. Your GP should be able to arrange this if you explain that you're off to university and registering with a new practice. This gives you peace of mind and hopefully will mean you have a few spares if all goes to plan.

Many practices will advise that you make an appointment with a GP or nurse that specialises in type 1 diabetes. This can help to get your prescription loaded onto their computer system quickly (make sure to take your prescription list from your previous surgery) and make you aware of the support they offer. People with type 1 diabetes are exempt from prescription charges – you can pick up an exemption form at your GP surgery or chemist if you don't already have one. Exemption certificates are only needed in England - prescriptions are free to everyone in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Speak to your GP about prescriptions during the holidays. Many are happy to issue a 3-month supply for holidays so you don't have to worry about re-registering at your home GP. If you leave a stamped addressed envelope with your GP they can also send scripts to you when you need them at home. Speak to your GP about whether they have electronic prescribing, as this can make ordering prescriptions between home and university easier. This can be set up with your local pharmacy while at university and be changed to your home pharmacy during the

holidays. If none of these options are possible, when you go back home during holidays you may need to re-register at your home GP in order to access prescriptions there. This should involve completing a short form to register as a temporary resident.

If you wish to be seen by the local hospital healthcare team, your GP will be able to organise this for you. They can also refer you to have your diabetic retinopathy screening done locally.

Accessing specialist diabetes care

You may want to consider moving your specialist diabetes healthcare to a hospital closer to university. This is entirely up to you. For some it can be easier to have diabetes checks closer to university rather than having to travel home. Discuss this with your current team to decide if this would be the best option for you. If you prefer to keep your diabetes care at home then clinic appointments can be made during holidays. Make sure you have the contact details for your diabetes specialist nurse in case you need advice whilst away at university. If you need to rearrange appointments it's worth contacting your hospital specialist secretaries rather than the main hospital administrative team.

Remember to let your diabetes team know if you register with a new GP. If you move address during the second and third years don't forget to let your GP and diabetes team know your new contact details so that they can contact you for clinic appointments, retinal screening etc. A template letter, to keep a record of all your health details, can be found at the end of this toolkit. Ask your diabetes team to complete this before you leave for university. You can then hand this to your new GP at university. This will give them important information quickly, while they're waiting for your health records to arrive.