

Observatory Medical Practice

JERICHO HEALTH CENTRE

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Additional Information and Health Advice for Students

Accessing Medical Care in Oxford

In England, health care is primarily provided by the NHS (National Health Service). All students who are studying in the UK for longer than six months, and their dependents, are entitled to register to receive these services. There are a range of different services that you may need to access during your time at Oxford – if you are unsure which service you require, NHS 111 or the College Nurse can advise. In the UK, to access specialist services, you need to be referred by a GP – please make an appointment to discuss this if you feel that it is the case. **In a life-threatening emergency phone 999, or if you have a significant injury such as a broken bone please go straight to A&E at the John Radcliffe Hospital.**

Medication and Repeat Prescriptions

If you take regular medication you can order repeat prescriptions from your GP. You will need an initial appointment to arrange this with the doctor after you arrive in Oxford. After this, you may request a repeat prescription in various ways – by emailing your name and the details of the medication required to jericho.two@nhs.net, signing up for Patient Access to send requests via this online service (forms are available on our website), leaving a request at reception at Observatory Medical Practice, or speaking to the pharmacist at your regular pharmacy. We can send your prescription directly to a pharmacy of your choice for you to collect. *Please allow 48 hours when ordering repeat prescriptions.*

If you require a repeat prescription while you are away from University but still in the UK, please request your prescription via email, including the details of the local pharmacy that you need it to be sent to. Please then remember to ask us to change your pharmacy back to Oxford when you return! There is a standard charge, currently of £9, for each item on an NHS prescription which is payable to the pharmacist. If you need, on average, more than one prescription item per month, you may prefer to purchase a pre-payment certificate, as this may be more cost-effective. Some people are exempt from prescription charges, including those with certain medical conditions. Please see <http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcosts/Pages/Prescriptioncosts.aspx> for further information or speak to a pharmacist.

Extra information for students from overseas: *There are some medicines and treatments that are not available through the NHS (e.g. desensitising injections for the treatment of allergies), and others that are restricted. We will endeavour to prescribe effective alternatives for you. In particular, NHS GPs are unable to prescribe medication for the treatment of ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) unless the condition meets the criteria for diagnosis in the UK – these may differ from those in other countries including the USA. If this is the case you may need to see a private GP or specialist to get your prescriptions privately. We can help arrange this for you, but you will find that this is expensive and there may be some time delay. Therefore, it may be simplest for you to bring any medication you require to the UK with you or arrange to have it sent to you from home.*

Immunisations

It is important to check you have had all of your immunisations before you arrive, in particular the MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) vaccine, and the Meningitis C (now given as Meningitis ACWY) vaccine as these infections can circulate in the student population. Over recent years we have had several mini-epidemics in Oxford of mumps. If you have missed any immunisations we can give them to you, but immunity takes time to develop. Included is further information about immunisations.

Travel

If you are planning to travel abroad to an area requiring vaccinations or malaria prevention treatment (or if you are unsure) please fill in one of our travel forms, available on our website or from Reception. Once you return this to Reception, one of the nurses will be in touch with you to discuss which vaccinations you may require, and when you should have these. Please provide us with as much notice as possible especially during peak travel times, as there may be a slight delay in getting an appointment.

Colds and Flu

Up to 90% of students will get 'Freshers' Flu', or other colds and viral infections. There is no magic cure for these – antibiotics will not help! You are able to ease the symptoms by regularly taking paracetamol and/or ibuprofen (make sure you eat something when you take ibuprofen, people with certain medical conditions such as asthma should not take ibuprofen) which help with general aches and pains, and using decongestants or steam inhalation to ease nose congestion. Drink plenty of (non-alcoholic) drinks and get sufficient rest. If you require more advice, please speak to a pharmacist who will be able to assist you. You may also reduce the likelihood of getting colds, and improve your recovery time by following a healthy lifestyle – more information about this can be found below.

Contraception and Sexual Health

To avoid sexually transmitted diseases including HIV you should always use a condom. We also encourage annual chlamydia testing, or when you have a new sexual partner – you can get a chlamydia self-test kit posted to you (in discreet packaging) here <https://chlamydia.sexualhealthoxfordshire.nhs.uk/>. More information is available from the doctor or nurse.

A comprehensive range of contraceptive services are available via the doctor and nurse. The Oxfordshire Sexual Health Service provides contraception, testing and management of sexually transmitted infections including HIV. There are two clinics in Oxford: the GUM clinic at the Churchill Hospital and the STI clinic on Rectory Road. You can access this service as a walk-in or make an appointment – please see www.sexualhealthoxfordshire.nhs.uk or phone 01865 231231.

For women aged 25-64 who have ever been sexually active: Cervical smears are usually done every 3 years for women up to the age of 50, and then every 5 years for women between 50 and 64. This checks the cervix (neck of the womb) for abnormal cells which may develop into cancer. If you qualify, please contact the GP surgery to enquire about this or make an appointment – it is very quick and could save you problems in the future!

Mental Health and Stress

There are different symptoms of mental health problems and stress. Some common ones are low mood, lack of motivation, anxiousness, sleeping too much or too little, eating too much or too little, difficulty caring for one's self, loss of interest in sex, and inability to engage with academic work. If you are troubled by any of these, or other problems not mentioned above, it is important to speak to someone. You may want to speak to a friend, family member, tutor, the University Counselling Service, college chaplain or chapel officer, or the college nurse or doctor. There are a number of other places to turn to for support, such as Oxford Nightline (a listening service run by students, for students) on 01865 270270 from 8pm to 8am from 0th to 9th week or national organisations such as the Samaritans on 116 123 (24 hours a day, 365 days a year); both of these services are confidential. Further details can be found in the college welfare information you will receive.

Healthy Lifestyle

There are a number of lifestyle choices that you will be faced with during your time at University. These can help you with your health and wellbeing both in the short and long terms. If you have any concerns regarding this please speak to the nurse or doctor who can assist you or point you towards the relevant services.

Alcohol: Alcohol can be harmful – therefore it is recommended that you drink no more than 14 units/week. Binge drinking (large quantities of drink consumed in a short period of time) is especially harmful, and therefore women should not drink more than 3 units, and men 4 units, in any given day. A unit of alcohol is roughly equal to half a pint of normal strength beer, cider, or lager, a single measure of spirits, less than a small glass of wine. Many drinks are stronger than this, or come in larger measures. If you are drinking, we advise that you have eaten well before drinking (particularly carbohydrates), and make sure you stay hydrated with non-alcoholic drinks (all places serving alcohol must also provide free tap water). Please also look out for each other, and make sure that anyone who has drunk too much alcohol or who has become unwell gets the necessary help and is safe.

If you have issues with drugs or alcohol you can contact Turning Point Oxford at oxfordshire@turning-point.co.uk

Healthy Eating: It is very easy when you are away from home and busy to rely on processed and convenience foods, but try to make sure that you balance your diet with plenty of fruits, vegetables, protein (including nuts and pulses, and oily fish), and not consume too much saturated fat or sugar. In the short term you will have more energy and be more able to fight any infections you get, and in the long term a healthy diet can reduce your risk of getting heart and gut diseases, and diabetes.

Exercise: Exercise does not need to be rowing in the Oxford and Cambridge boat race, or running a marathon! Getting just 30 minutes of exercise over a day, 5 days a week, can improve both your mental and physical health. Anything that makes your heart rate increase and gets you mildly out of breath counts – cycling or walking briskly to a lecture or the shops, dancing, exploring Oxford by yourself or with a friend, or participating in organised sports for example.

Smoking: Smoking has been shown to be linked to a number of health problems and early death. If you would like help to stop smoking please see <https://www.smokefreelifeoxfordshire.co.uk/> for resources available in Oxford.