

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 completing a request form on the practice website, using one of the online systems such as Patient Access or the NHS App, or speaking to the pharmacist at your regular pharmacy. *Please allow at least 48 hours (not including weekends) when ordering repeat prescriptions.*

If you require a repeat prescription while you are away from University but still in England, we can still prescribe for you. If you know the address of a local pharmacy please include this in your prescription request, if not please just let us know you are out of Oxford and we can send you a code to get your prescription from any English pharmacy.

There is a standard charge, currently of £9.65, for each item on an NHS prescription which is payable to the pharmacist (contraceptive medication is always free). 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 <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/prescriptions-and-pharmacies/nhs-prescription-charges/> 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 the form to us, we 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

A comprehensive range of contraceptive services are available via the Practice, including the contraceptive coil and implant.

To avoid sexually transmitted diseases including HIV you should always use a condom. We also encourage annual STI testing, or when you have a new sexual partner – you can get a self-test kit posted to you (in discreet packaging) from the Oxfordshire Sexual Health Service, based at the Churchill Hospital. They also provide contraceptive services, telephone and in-person consultations and testing, and management of STIs including HIV care. You can access this service by phoning 01865 231231 or via www.sexualhealthoxfordshire.nhs.uk/.

Cervical screening is offered through the NHS to all those with a cervix who are aged 25-64. By checking for certain strains of HPV and early changes to the cells of the cervix, early treatment can be provided if required to prevent the formation of cancer. HPV can be spread through any form of sexual contact and is very common throughout the population. For further information about cervical screening and who is eligible please see <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cervical-screening/>. If you would like to book an appointment or have any specific questions, please contact the practice and speak to reception.

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 are having problems with your use of alcohol or drugs you can contact Turning Point Roads to Recovery – www.turning-point.co.uk/services/oxfordshire - who provide free, confidential support.

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 www.stopforlifeoxon.org for resources available in Oxford.