

8.1 Information for patients considering private medical consultations

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS CONSIDERING PRIVATE MEDICAL CONSULTATIONS

When you consult a private specialist you should be aware of what may happen about medication you may need **after** the consultation. You may not always be able to obtain an NHS prescription for medication arising from a private consultation.

Guidance for NHS patients

In March 2009, the Scottish Government published guidance for NHS patients who wish to pay for additional private care. The guidance includes the key points below:

- your NHS care will continue to be free of charge
- you can't be asked to pay towards your NHS care, except where legislation allows charges, such as travel medicines
- the NHS cannot pay for or subsidise your privately funded care
- your privately funded care must be given separately, at a different time and place from your NHS Care

Independent Private Referral:

If you choose to refer yourself to a consultant independently of your GP for additional privately funded care (i.e. outside the NHS), whether in the UK or abroad, you are expected to pay the full cost of any treatment (including medication) you receive in relation to the package of care provided privately (including non-emergency complications).

Private referral through your GP:

After a private referral made by your GP, your private specialist may give you a prescription. You may only need one prescription. The prescription provided by your private specialist will be a private prescription and you must pay for the medication.

If you need continued treatment you may initially be given just one private prescription (which you will need to pay for) and advised to return to your GP to see if further NHS prescriptions can be provided.

There is no obligation, however, for your GP to accept the recommendation made to prescribe the treatment recommended by a private specialist. To judge your clinical need for the treatment including the reasons for the proposed medication, your GP must have received a full clinical report from the private specialist.

If your GP does not feel able to accept this responsibility, then the GPs may consider:

- Offering a referral to an NHS consultant to consider whether the recommended medication should be prescribed as part of on-going NHS funded treatment
- Asking the specialist to remain responsible for the treatment because of its specialist nature, and to provide further prescriptions, for which you will need to pay.
- Prescribing you an equivalent locally recommended medication, which should deliver a similar /identical benefit.

Only if your GP considers there is a clinical need for your medicine, and that an NHS patient would be treated in the same way, would an NHS prescription to continue your treatment be considered. If the recommendation from your private specialist is for treatment that is not in line with local policies, then your GP may change the medication in line with that used for NHS patients.

How much will a private prescription cost?

The cost of a private prescription is calculated depending on the medicine. There is considerable variation in the cost of medicines so it is wise to discuss the possible cost with your consultant as part of your treatment plan.

Any community pharmacy can supply and dispense your medication on private prescription. Some private hospitals have pharmacy departments that can dispense your private prescription.

The pharmacy will charge you for the **full cost** of your medication. They will also charge a professional fee for the process of obtaining, dispensing and checking your medicine. This may vary from pharmacy to pharmacy so you are entitled to 'shop around' before deciding where you would like your medicine to be dispensed.