

Hospital Travel Costs Scheme (HTCS)

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You may be able to get financial help from the Hospital Travel Costs Scheme if you're on a low income, need NHS treatment at a hospital, other NHS centre or private clinic and have been referred by an NHS hospital consultant.

Who can claim?

You're automatically entitled to claim Hospital Travel Costs Scheme if you (or those you depend on) get at least one of the following:

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

You also qualify if your income is £15,050 or less and you also get one of the following:

- Child Tax Credit (with or without Working Tax Credit)
- Working Tax Credit with the disability element or severe disability element

If an adult or your dependent child has to travel to your treatment with you for medical reasons, you can claim their travel costs too.

If you're on a low income but don't get any of these benefits or allowances, you may still claim travel costs through the NHS low income support scheme.

How much do you get?

If you're on entitled benefits or allowances you get back the full travel costs by using the cheapest form of public transport available, including any concessions or promotions. This applies to however you travel. If for example, you use a private car you can claim for petrol instead (and car parking charges where unavoidable) up to the cost of the same journey by public transport.

The hospital should tell you the mileage rate for petrol costs for private transport.

If public transport is unavailable or impractical (perhaps you can't get to your appointment on time or your mobility is restricted), you'll need to contact the hospital well before your appointment. They will need to check your new travel arrangements are allowed.

If you're on the NHS low income scheme you may get back all or some of your travel costs depending on which certificate you've been given.

How to claim

You can claim at the NHS hospital or clinic at the time of your appointment. You'll be paid back immediately in cash, when you show any of the following:

- proof of a qualifying benefit (like an award notice)
- a tax credit exemption certificate (you'll get this automatically if you qualify)
- a certificate showing you qualify for the NHS low income support scheme

The NHS low income support scheme

To apply for the NHS low income support scheme, you'll need to fill in form HC1.

You can order form HC1 online, by phone; call the NHS Patient Services helpline 0845 850 1166 (8.00 am to 6.00 pm Monday to Friday - calls are charged at the local rate) or get it from:

- NHS hospitals
- Jobcentre Plus offices
- some GP surgeries, dentists and opticians

Your form will be assessed and if you're entitled you'll get a certificate that confirms whether you receive full or partial help with your hospital travel costs.

What else you need to know

Backdated claims

You can claim help with travel costs up to three months after your appointment, as long as you can prove you were eligible to claim at the time. To do this, you'll need to fill in a refund claim form (HC5), which you can get from:

- NHS hospitals
- Jobcentre Plus offices
- the NHS Patient Services helpline, on 0845 850 1166 (8.00 am to 6.00 pm Monday to Friday - calls are charged at the local rate)