

If I pay for private hospital treatment, how will my NHS care be affected?

You're still entitled to NHS care free of charge, and it can't be withdrawn.

Guidance for NHS patients

In March 2009, the Department of Health (DH) published guidance for NHS patients who 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 prescription charges
- the NHS cannot pay for or subsidise your private hospital treatment
- your private hospital treatment must be given separately from your NHS treatment

What does 'separately' mean?

This means that you must receive your private and NHS hospital treatment:

- at different times
- in different places
- as clearly separate from one another as possible

Occasionally, a patient's doctor may agree that they can receive their NHS and private treatment in the same place. For example, if the doctor decides the patient is too ill to be moved.

NHS organisations that also provide private treatment

The DH guidance applies to all organisations in England that provide or arrange NHS secondary and specialist healthcare. This type of care is normally provided in hospital.

If your NHS organisation chooses to provide private healthcare, you may receive your private treatment, for example:

- in a separate wing of an NHS hospital
- at a private clinic run after NHS hours
- in a private room

Your NHS and private treatment can be supervised by one healthcare team, although you will receive the treatments separately. However, you shouldn't need the same test twice, for example, to diagnose or monitor your condition. In this case, the test will probably be part of your NHS care.

Specialist NHS equipment, such as scanners, may be used for private patients, as long as this does not affect the care of NHS patients.

Other NHS organisations

If your NHS organisation doesn't provide private healthcare, you may receive your private treatment:

- at another NHS organisation
- from a private healthcare provider
- at home from a home healthcare provider

What treatments can my doctor tell me about?

Your doctor will tell you about all the treatments for your condition, including any that are only available privately.

However, NHS doctors aren't allowed to advertise private services to NHS patients. If you want to know whether your doctor can treat you privately, you will need to ask. They can then tell you about the private services that they offer, for example, cancer medicines or other medicines not funded through the NHS.

Private consultations

If you've had a private consultation for tests and diagnosis, you can still have treatment on the NHS. Your position on the NHS waiting list should be the same as if your original consultation was on the NHS.

What if I have complications?

Your private healthcare provider will normally treat any non-emergency complications that result from the private part of your care. You'll need to pay for this treatment yourself. For example, you might have side effects that need extra treatment.

However, the NHS should never refuse to treat patients because the cause of the complication is unclear and should continue to treat any patient in an

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emergency.

Read the answers to more questions about [NHS services and treatments](#).

Further information:

- [Do I need a GP referral for private treatment?](#)
- [NHS services explained](#)
- [Cancer](#)
- [Chemotherapy](#)
- [Department of Health: Guidance on NHS patients who wish to pay for additional private care](#)

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