ALK Positive Lung Cancer (UK)

Advice on Obtaining NHS Treatment as an International Student or Worker

1. Eligibility

A student with a Student Visa or a worker with a Worker Visa, both valid for more than 6 months, is automatically eligible to use the NHS once they have paid the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) as part of the visa application. Some workers pay a reduced or nil charge for the HIS.

This gives access to:

- GP (doctor) services
- NHS hospital treatment
- A&E (emergency) services
- Sexual health and contraception
- Treatment for infectious diseases
- Mental health services
- COVID-19 vaccination and treatment

2. Register with a GP (General Practitioner)

This is the key step to accessing routine NHS care.

- Find a local GP practice near their UK address (universities or employers often recommend one).
- Complete the GP registration form (GMS1) online or in person.
- Provide proof of identity (passport) and proof of address (tenancy agreement, university accommodation letter).

GP registration is free, and GP practices cannot refuse registration based on nationality or immigration status.

3. Obtain an NHS Number

After GP registration, the student/worker will be issued an NHS number. This is required for appointments, prescriptions, and referrals.

If they have never been registered with the NHS before, the number will be created automatically.

4. Access NHS services

Once registered, the student/worker can:

- Book GP appointments – some GPs will have electronic booking systems while others with have a telephone procedure
- Be prescribed medicines and other treatments. Some GP practices will have pharmacies attached to them. Others may have arrangements with a nearby pharmacy for the prescription to be sent electronically or manually. Other GPs may hand you the prescription to take to a pharmacy of your choice
- Receive referrals to specialists – ask to be referred to an oncologist or hospital which has experience of dealing with ALK-positive patients. The Charity can advise about this.
- Access hospital treatment
- Use emergency services

In Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland prescriptions are free but there is a charge in England.

5. Hospital Treatment

ALK-positive patients will be cared for at a hospital which will prescribe cancer drugs. There is no charge for these drugs.

It may take some time before the first hospital appointment is made. If possible, bring a 3-month supply of cancer medications when you enter the country.

Bring scan and blood test results and any other documentation and take them to the first appointment. However, the oncologist may want to have scans and blood taken before prescribing medication.

6. Understand what is NOT free

Even with IHS, some services require payment:

- Dental treatment (unless exempt)
- Optical services (eye tests, glasses)
- Some vaccinations (e.g., travel vaccines)

7. If the course or work is under 6 months

Students/workers of less than 6 months are *not* eligible for NHS treatment and must obtain private health insurance.

8. Support Group

ALK-positive patients may find it useful to join the Charity's private Facebook Support Group where they can exchange experiences with and ask questions of other patients.

http://facebook.com/groups/ALKpositiveUK

The Charity's website contains much useful information, including details of subsidised regional lunches and the annual free weekend conference.

Supporting Patients of ALK+ Lung Cancer | ALK Positive UK

9. Note

This guidance is intended to help ALK-positive students and workers with appropriate visas to access treatment on the NHS. It does not give guidance on obtaining visas.

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