

Prescribing Policy for Patients Working Abroad or Offshore

1. Purpose

This policy sets out the approach to prescribing medication for patients who will be:

- Travelling abroad
- Working offshore
- Employed in the Merchant Navy or similar roles

It ensures prescribing is:

- Safe and clinically appropriate
- Consistent with NHS and ICB guidance
- Fair and transparent

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All prescribers within the practice
- All patients registered at the practice who request medication for extended periods due to absence from the UK

3. Principles

Cleveland's Medical Centre recognises that:

- Patients working at sea or overseas may have limited access to healthcare
- Standard NHS prescribing durations (typically 28–56 days) may not be appropriate in these circumstances

Prescribing decisions will be based on:

- Clinical safety
- Individual patient needs
- Duration of travel/work
- Medication type and monitoring requirements

4. NHS and ICB Guidance

In line with NHS and ICB guidance:

- Prescriptions for travel or extended absence should not routinely exceed 3 months' supply on the NHS
- NHS funding is intended for reasonable quantities for personal use within the UK
- Requests for larger quantities may require private prescribing arrangements

5. Prescribing Approach

5.1 Standard Position

- Patients will usually be provided with up to 3 months' supply where clinically appropriate
- Each request will be assessed individually

5.2 Extended Absence (including Merchant Navy personnel)

For patients:

- Working offshore
- Serving in the Merchant Navy
- Working abroad for extended periods

The practice may:

- Issue up to 3 months' NHS supply, where safe
- Consider additional supply via private prescription

5.3 Private Prescriptions

Where medication required exceeds NHS guidance:

- Patients may request a private prescription
- The patient will be responsible for:
 - Pharmacy costs
 - Any associated fees

6. Clinical Considerations

Prescribers must consider:

6.1 Suitability of Extended Supply

- Stability of the medical condition
- Risk of deterioration
- Likelihood of adherence

6.2 Medication Risk

- High-risk medications (e.g. anticoagulants, lithium)
- Controlled drugs (subject to legal restrictions)
- Medications requiring monitoring

6.3 Monitoring Requirements

- Whether blood tests or clinical review are required
- If monitoring cannot be safely undertaken, extended supply may be refused

7. Situations Where Extended Supply May Be Declined

The practice may decline extended prescribing where:

- The medication requires regular monitoring
- There are safety concerns
- There is a risk of misuse or diversion
- The request is not clinically justified

8. Patient Responsibilities

Patients requesting extended supplies must:

- Provide reasonable notice (minimum 2–4 weeks)
- Inform the practice of:
 - Duration of travel/work
 - Destination/employer (if relevant)
- Attend medication reviews prior to travel
- Ensure safe storage of medicines while away

9. Alternative Arrangements

Patients are advised to:

- Check employer (e.g. shipping company) medical provisions
- Ensure access to healthcare provision whilst abroad if needed
- Carry a summary of medical records if appropriate

10. Documentation

All decisions must be clearly documented, including:

- Duration of absence
- Quantity supplied
- Clinical reasoning for extended prescribing
- Whether private prescribing was used

11. Equality and Consistency

The practice will:

- Apply this policy fairly and consistently
- Consider individual circumstances
- Avoid discrimination

12. Review and Governance

- This policy will be reviewed annually
- It aligns with:
 - NHS England prescribing guidance
 - Local ICB policies
 - GMC prescribing standards

Reviewed: 19 July 2026