

Five things you should know about Prison Health Care

1. Prison Healthcare in the north of Ireland is provided by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, also known as the 'SEHSCT'.

2. The SEHSCT are responsible for providing services for:

- Physical Health
- Mental Health
- Medication
- Dentist

3. Prisoners are entitled to an equivalent standard of care as you would expect outside of prison.

4. Prisoners are also entitled to patient confidentiality. Some information is shared between healthcare staff and prison guards, such as certain medical conditions that prison staff should be aware of if you become unwell suddenly.

Information, such as what medication you are on, or why you are speaking to the Healthcare team should not be shared and remain confidential.

5. Everyone should see a nurse on committal to prison, and if they are transferred to another prison. If you did not, then you can request an appointment. While in prison you have the right to access medical appointments that are confidential and free of prejudice.

To healthcare staff you are a patient, not a prisoner.

How to access Health Care in Prison

- In prison, the nurse (often called a Medic or the M.O.) is usually the first point of contact.

- Most routine appointments can be obtained by filling in a medical request from that should be on every landing.

Place this request in the medical request box.

- Medical request forms can be used for non-urgent GP appointments, nurse assessments (called 'triage') and to see the optician.

- If you are unwell or it is an emergency, ask prison staff to contact the nurse.

Prison staff may ask you some questions, such as 'Do you have chest pain?' to try and find out if the nurse needs to come immediately, or bring anything with them.

- If you become unwell when locked in your cell, use the emergency cell bell.

- If you believe you need to see a GP urgently, ask the nurses to assess (triage) you.

- To see the dentist, you need to ask prison staff to put you on the dental list.

Medication

- Unless there is a medical reason, any medication you take on the outside should be given to you while in prison.

- Healthcare staff will do a risk assessment to determine if it is safe for you to keep your medication in your cell.

- If you do have your own medications in your possession lock them in the safe in your cell. You will have to reorder them usually a week in advance.

- If you are on supervised medication you should not miss doses because you were not called to the nurse.

- Nurses can provide you with patient packs of certain medication for minor ailments. For example: *Paracetamol*

- You can be subject to a medication spot check. If you fail this, your medication may be stopped or you may not be allowed to keep them in your possession.

- Healthcare staff will inform the prison if you fail a medication check, and you can be punished through disciplinary proceedings as a result.

- When you are drug tested, the consent form you sign gives your permission for a list of your medications to be shared with the company that does the test.

- During cell searches, prison staff should not be searching medication. This is the responsibility of healthcare staff.

Five things you should know about Prison Health Care

- A lot of problems can be dealt with quickly by speaking to a nurse.
- If you wish to complain. Fill out a blue healthcare complaint form and give it to the nurse in person, and get the signed receipt at the bottom. Don't lose this.
- Your complaint should be answered within five days.
- If you are still not happy, you can escalate your complaint to the **Complaints Department** by phone or post.

Correspondence between a prisoner and statutory bodies should mark on the envelope: '**Privileged Correspondence S.O.5.3.5**' and will be considered '*Private & Confidential*'. If you write a letter, landing staff should seal the letter in front of you without reading it, like a legal letter:

**Freepost
Complaints Manager
SEHSCT
Lough House
Ards Hospital
Newtownards, BT23 4AS**

- You should receive a response from the Complaints Manager within 20 days.
- If you are still not happy you can contact the **Public Services Ombudsman** for a review.

**Progressive House,
33 Wellington Pl,
Belfast, BT1 6HN**

If you have any other questions or queries or would like support and solidarity.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with IWOC - **Incarcerated Workers Organising Committee** at our postal or email address below:



**IWOC Ireland
P.O. Box 346
Derry City
BT48 4FZ**

**Ireland@iww.org.uk
onebigunion.ie**

**A
Prisoner s
Guide
to
Prison
Health
Care
in
the
North
of
Ireland**