

Starting university—the whirlwind of Freshers week, new friends, and that overwhelming to-do list. Among the top priorities is **GP registration**. If you manage a chronic condition or are curious about emerging treatments like **NHS medical cannabis**, you might wonder: *Can my GP prescribe medical cannabis, or do I need to see a specialist?* What about prescription costs, and how do schemes like the NHS Low Income Scheme come into play? Let's untangle these questions with clear answers, timelines, and a handy checklist.

## Freshers Week and GP Registration: Why You Shouldn't Wait

Week one or two at uni is the sweet spot for setting up your healthcare basics. Registering with the university or local GP isn't just bureaucracy—it's your [term time address nhs](#) gateway to NHS support during term-time. Missing this deadline can mean delays accessing advice, prescriptions, and care for common conditions.

Here's a quick checklist:

1. By **Week 2**, complete your GP registration—whether you're continuing with your home GP's remote care or registering with a local practice near campus.
2. Let reception staff know your situation if you're juggling prescriptions across home and term addresses—this is common and manageable with clear communication.
3. Use university health services as a first stop if you're unsure where to begin—they can also signpost you to appropriate NHS pathways.

### Pro Tip:

Follow your uni's official Facebook or Twitter pages for reminders and live Q&A sessions often held during Freshers week. Student advice communities on these platforms also share real-time experiences, which can clarify things.

## Medical Cannabis Prescription in the UK: GP Versus Specialist

Now for the big question: **Can your GP prescribe medical cannabis on the NHS?** The short answer is *usually not*. NHS medical cannabis prescriptions are tightly regulated and almost always initiated by doctors on the GMC specialist register.

Here's why:

- Medical cannabis is considered a specialist treatment for specific conditions like epilepsy or multiple sclerosis spasticity where evidence supports its use.
- Only consultants (not most GPs) who have expertise and are on the specialist register can initiate these prescriptions.
- GPs can sometimes continue prescribing after a specialist starts the treatment, but they can't typically begin it themselves.

So if you think you'd benefit from medical cannabis, your GP's role is mainly as the first step to refer you to the right specialist. It's a process that takes time and often includes multiple appointments.

## Pharmacy-First Care and Common Conditions

Before you jump straight to specialist care or worry about complicated prescriptions, remember that many conditions can be managed by your local pharmacist and GP. This **pharmacy-first approach** helps with:

- Minor illnesses (coughs, colds, rashes)
- Repeat prescriptions for standard medications
- Advice on managing symptoms and when to escalate care

This approach reduces waiting times in surgeries and emergency departments. Plus, pharmacists often operate extended hours, which is a lifesaver during busy uni weeks 3–6 when work and social life collide.

## Prescription Charges, Exemptions, and Avoiding Overpaying

Let’s talk money because no one likes surprise bills. In England, there’s a standard prescription charge (£9.65 per item as of 2024). But students, particularly those on long-term medications, can find this adding up fast.

Here’s what you need to know:

1. Some groups are exempt from charges—children under 16, youths aged 16–18 in full-time education, pregnant women, patients with specific medical conditions, and those on certain benefits.
2. Students not exempt should consider the NHS Prescription Prepayment Certificate (PPC) if they need multiple items. A PPC covers all prescriptions for either three months (£30.25) or 12 months (£108.10).
3. The NHS Low Income Scheme (LIS) helps those with limited funds by providing certificates that reduce or waive prescription costs.

### Example Table: Cost Savings With a PPC versus Individual Charges

| Number of Prescriptions per Month | Cost Without PPC | Cost With 3-Month PPC | Cost Saving over 3 Months |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1                                 | £28.95           | £30.25                | –£1.30                    |
| 2                                 | £57.90           | £30.25                | £27.65                    |
| 3                                 | £86.85           | £30.25                | £56.60                    |

As the table shows, if you’re picking up two or more prescriptions monthly, a PPC quickly pays for itself. Calculate your situation early, ideally by **week 7** of term, when prescriptions stabilize and you have a sense of your needs.

## How to Apply for NHS Low Income Scheme and PPC

If you struggle with prescription costs, applying to the NHS Low Income Scheme is your next move. Here’s a simple five-minute checklist:

1. Gather documents: recent payslips, benefits letters, bank statements.
2. Fill in the HC1 form online or request from your GP or social services.
3. Submit the form and wait for your certificate—processing can take 2–4 weeks, so apply early.
4. Once approved, use your certificate when requesting prescriptions to get discounts or exemptions.
5. For prescriptions without exemption, buy a PPC from pharmacies or online.

Remember: these certificates typically last 12 months, so setting a calendar reminder before renewal cuts unnecessary costs.



## Putting It All Together: Your Timeline for Prescription and Care Setup

Here's a straightforward timetable to keep your NHS healthcare and prescription needs on track during your first term:

- **Week 1–2:** Register with a local GP and/or university health services. If you need medical cannabis, discuss referrals.
- **Week 3–6:** Sort out repeat prescriptions (pharmacy-first care is your friend here). Check prescription costs and exemptions.
- **Week 7:** Evaluate prescription frequency and decide if a PPC or NHS Low Income Scheme application is needed.
- **Week 8–10:** Submit NHS Low Income Scheme application if applicable, and purchase PPC if needed.
- **November onwards:** Review your GP appointments and medication plan to ensure smooth care as assessments and deadlines ramp up.

## Final Thoughts: Don't Let Uncertainty Delay Your Care

Medical cannabis on the NHS isn't a straightforward GP prescription. It involves specialists, referrals, and navigating the GMC specialist register system. But for most students, the focus is on getting registered early, using pharmacy-first care, and making smart choices about prescription payments.



Use your uni's Facebook and Twitter to stay updated—they'll often have health reminders and tips tailored for your campus. Above all, be proactive: sorting out your GP registration and prescription payments by mid-term avoids stress during exam season.

Got questions or experiences about NHS medical cannabis, prescription costs, or GP registration? Drop a comment below or reach out on your uni's official social channels—helping each other is how we get through those November problems!