



Highland Sexual Health

NHS
Highland
na Gàidhealtachd

Welcome

to Highland Sexual Health



Who is this leaflet for?

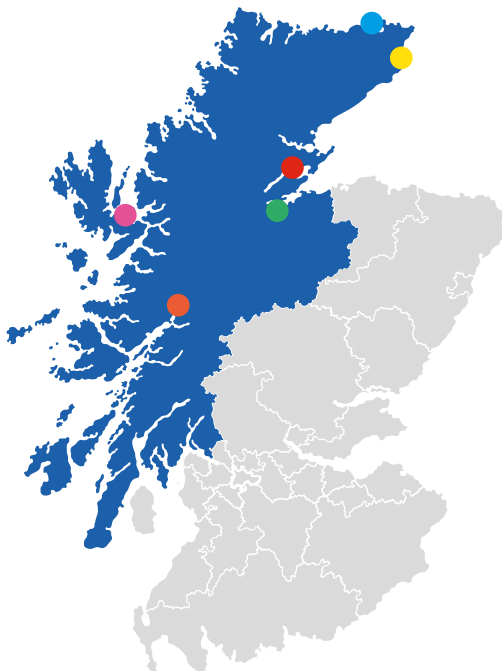
This leaflet is for people accessing Highland Sexual Health for HIV care.

About our service

We are a small team of 4 HIV consultants, 1 HIV specialist nurse, 1 HIV administrator, 1 HIV pharmacist, health advisors and healthcare support workers. We all work part time within these roles. Our service supports people living with HIV throughout the Highlands and Western Isles.

Our main base is at the **RNI Community hospital** in Inverness, with some services available at peripheral sites in Thurso, Wick, Invergordon, Fort William and Broadford on the Isle of Skye.

- Inverness
- Invergordon
- Fort William
- Broadford
- Thurso
- Wick



What you can expect from us

Review appointments

We provide holistic HIV care. This includes regular appointments to monitor your health, carry out the necessary tests and provide your HIV medication. Appointments will usually be every 6 months, but vary according to individual need and circumstances. Appointments are usually face to face at the RNI community hospital on Tuesday mornings, but in some circumstances we might make arrangements for monitoring tests to be carried out nearer to your home at your GP or one of our peripheral clinics, followed by a telephone or video appointment for review with your consultant or specialist nurse.

Please call us to arrange an appointment 1-2 months before your review is due in order to avoid delay. If your appointment is overdue we will give you a call to offer you an appointment.

During your appointments we will ask you questions about your general physical and mental wellbeing, medication you are taking, vaccinations you have had and offer any outstanding. We invite you to raise any issues of concern within any aspect of your life. Even when we can't help directly, we are happy to listen and signpost to other services if appropriate.

Monitoring tests

Routine monitoring tests are usually carried out every 6 months during your review appointment. For people recently diagnosed, or if any problems arise, we may recommend testing more frequently. The tests we carry out are to ensure we are providing you with effective treatment, monitoring for side effects and for your general health.

Monitoring tests include blood tests to check [HIV viral load](#), kidney function, liver function, and bone minerals, usually every 6 months. Other tests we do annually include a full blood count, diabetes test (HbA1c), lipids and cholesterol. You will have [CD4 count](#) testing initially and then repeated as required. We will also check height, weight, urine test and blood pressure. Screening for sexually transmitted infections is recommended if you haven't been tested before and if you have new partner(s).

Annual [cervical screening](#) is recommended for all people living with HIV with a cervix aged 25-64, which we can carry out if this is due at the time of your appointment. You may prefer to go to your GP practice nurse for this instead.

Other tests may be recommended depending on your individual health needs and would be discussed with you in advance.

Medication

For people established and stable on medication, we will usually provide a 6 month supply of medication. This can either be delivered to your chosen address by our homecare delivery service, delivered to the RNI Community hospital for collection, collected from Raigmore hospital pharmacy or sometimes it can be delivered to your GP practice (this depends on your GP practice).

For people who have recently started their HIV medication, recently switched to different medication, or if any medication issues are experienced we may issue a shorter supply initially until you are stable on the treatment. This is to ensure that the medication is working for you without serious side effects, and to reduce medication wastage.

If you need more medication please let us know at least a month before you are going to run out.

Please inform us before you start any new medication, supplements or recreational drugs so we can check that they are ok to take with your HIV medication. HIV medication can interact with many drugs and supplements, which might stop the treatment working properly or cause dangerous side effects.

More information on drug interactions is available [here](#).

Vaccinations

The vaccinations recommended for people living with HIV include all the vaccinations within the national vaccination programme, as well as a few additional, which include (*available at our clinic):

- Hepatitis A*
- Hepatitis B*
- HPV (if you are unvaccinated and aged under 46)*
- Influenza annual in autumn*
- COVID 19 – seasonally as per national guidance for long term health conditions
- Pneumococcal (PCV 13)*

Communication

Good communication is essential in providing safe and effective care. You will be asked about communication preferences when you join our service. Good communication between different professional teams involved in your care means better coordination, joined up care and safe prescribing.

After each clinic visit a letter summarising your review appointment will be sent to your GP, and a copy to yourself if you choose.

It is also important that you keep us informed of any changes to your circumstances or medication, any problems you are experiencing, or any requirements or requests. This might include a change of address, request for an appointment or more medication. Please don't hesitate to let us know if you have any concerns or questions.

Travelling to appointments

Our clinic at the RNI community hospital is a 20 minute walk from the bus and rail station in Inverness city centre. Parking is available at the hospital site, but can be limited at busy times, so please allow plenty of time.

For people living in remote and rural areas across the Highlands and Islands, travel costs and accommodation can be reimbursed in many situations.

Ask us for more information or take a look at this page:

[Financial assistance with patient travel | NHS Highland](#)

Feedback and Complaints

We are always happy to receive feedback, and are interested to hear how we can improve our service. You can give anonymous feedback via [CareOpinion](#). If you wish to make an official complaint this can be communicated directly to us or to the [Feedback team](#).



How you can help us provide the best care for you

- Provide us with up to date contact details so we can keep in touch with you.
- Let us know your communication preferences and needs.
- Let us know your individual circumstances – e.g. remote location, work or family commitments, disability.
- Let us know of any medication, supplements or recreational drugs you are taking so we can check they are ok to take with your HIV medication.
- To avoid any interruption to your medication supply, please contact us at least a month before you expect to run out to request a further supply and review appointment.
- For us to provide you with safe care, we need you to attend regular appointments and have regular blood monitoring.

Other support and resources

Support and information for people living with HIV:

[Terrance Higgins Trust](#)

Information about HIV and HIV medication:

[aidsmap](#)

Living well with HIV:

[Positively UK](#)

Know your rights:

[National AIDS trust](#)

Drug interaction checker:

[HIV drug interactions](#)



How to contact us

We are open 9-4:30pm Monday - Friday excluding public holidays.

For appointments or general enquiries call our reception on:
01463 888 300

For HIV specialist nurse call:
07971624154

For non-urgent enquiries you can email us on:
nhsh.o.p.enquiries@nhs.scot

Website: www.highlandsexualhealth.co.uk





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