

Top tips for veterans – how to get the most from your GP

1. On leaving the military, register with an NHS GP as soon as you can – don't leave it until you urgently need to see a doctor or nurse. In England, a good way to find out what NHS services are in your local area, is to visit [here](#).
2. When you register with an NHS GP, tell them that you are a military veteran so they can put this in your patient notes. Your practice can then ask for your military health records. Please note that in some areas of England there are some NHS GP surgeries that have a doctor or nurse that has specific knowledge about the military. You may consider registering at this surgery.
3. It can sometimes take a while for your military health records to arrive at your NHS GP surgery, although you will be given a summary of any medical care whilst you have been in uniform. If you have been getting hospital care or are having complex treatment, before you leave the services, ask your military doctor for a print out of your notes to give to your NHS doctor. A good time to ask would be at your final medical examination, which is often done about two months before handing in your ID card.
4. To check your military health records completely transfer into your NHS GP records, ensure that you give your NHS GP the paperwork that your military medical centre gave you. Please note that your medical records cannot be transferred until all of your administrative discharge arrangements are complete from your personnel centre.
5. Being flagged as a veteran in your NHS medical notes will help to ensure that you are able to access specific veterans' health services, such as those for mental health, hearing loss, limb amputation and wheelchairs.
6. It also means that where you have an illness or medical condition that has been caused by your time in service or occurred whilst you were in the military, you may be entitled to a shorter hospital waiting list. For example, if you developed skin cancer as a result of serving overseas for many years, this would be included. However, if you need a gall bladder operation, it would be unlikely that this was due to military service and so you would be treated as a typical NHS patient. This is part of the health commitments of the [Armed Forces Covenant](#).
7. With your consent, it can sometimes be helpful for your doctor to refer you to specific service charities, such as SSAFA, Royal British Legion, BLESMA or Help for Heroes. They can often offer significant help and support, even if they do not all deliver health care.
8. You may be worried about discussing elements of your time in service. Please note that the NHS is bound by a confidentiality code of practice to ensure GPs, nurses and other people working within the NHS deliver a confidential service bound by law.