

Visa and immigration information: For international patients/caregivers

Part 1: Consular information needed before you arrive at NIH

All international patients and caregivers receiving treatment at NIH need a B2 visa issued by the United States (U.S.) Consulate or Embassy in their country of origin.

- The B2 visa allows international patients and caregivers to enter the U.S. and obtain an extension to stay longer than 90 days to receive treatment at NIH.
- NIH assists with this process by sending the patient an invitation letter from the patient's research nurse. If the patient needs a caregiver, the letter includes the caregiver's name and the reason why he/she must accompany the patient.
- It is the responsibility of the patient and/or caregiver to be able to convince the consular official that they will return to their country of origin once treatment/evaluation ends.
- In addition to the NIH invitation letter, the visa applicant must provide the consular official with documents showing links to the country of origin as well as proof of financial support while the patient stays in the U.S. for treatment.

The Visa Waiver Program (VWP)

For patients from countries offering the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) or other border entry exceptions (such as those provided to citizens of Mexico, Canada and the Bahamas):

- Visitors with passports from countries offering the choice to enter the U.S. under the "Visa Waiver Program" (VWP) should be aware of the strict, non-renewable 90-day limit they are permitted to stay in the U.S.
- Patients who use the VWP or other program that waives an entry visa, once the 90-day period has expired, must leave the U.S. and return to their country of origin (not border countries) to re-enter the U.S. under that program. Therefore, all international patients and their caregivers who come from countries offering the VWP or other border entry exceptions should get a B2 visa when visiting the U.S. for treatment at the NIH.

NIH will be unable to help patients or their caregivers extend their stay if they come under the VWP or other program that waives an entry visa.

- Because events are not predictable, getting a B2 visa is important for patients and caregivers even when they do not expect to stay longer than 90 days. With a B2 visa, the patient or caregiver can extend a stay in the U.S. without needing to leave the country.

- Currently, citizens of the following countries qualify for the Visa Waiver Program: Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, United Kingdom.
- **Patients from Canada, Mexico or the Bahamas, or other countries** who have other options or visa exemptions when entering the U.S. should get a B2 visa so that they have no problems trying to extend their stays in the U.S.
- **Canadian patients** who have long-term treatments at NIH (4 months or more), should ask for a B-2 visa so that they can extend their stay in the U.S. after they have been in the U.S. for 6 months. All Canadian patients should have their passports stamped with a date of entry. This is very important for Canadian patients who travel by land.

Part 2: Immigration information needed when you arrive at NIH: Your visa and Arrival and Departure Stamp in your passport

When you arrived in the U.S. you completed a customs form and presented it to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer. This officer stamped your passport with an arrival and departure stamp.

Your visa

Please take a moment to look at the document stamped into your passport by the U.S. consulate in your country. This is your visa.

- The visa allows you to enter the U.S. **The visa is not the document that allows you to remain in the U.S.**

A visa can be issued for one (1) or multiple (M) entries. It can have an expiration date any time between 1 day and 10 years. The expiration date on this document shows the last day you are allowed to enter and travel to the U.S. Once this date has expired, you cannot use this visa again to enter the U.S. You must request a new visa.

- This visa will not:
 - Protect you against deportation
 - Guarantee that you may stay for the period of time shown on the visa
 - Guarantee that you will be able to get a new visa in the future

- Visitors with passports from countries that offer the choice to enter the U.S. under the “Visa Waiver Program” should be aware of the strict, non-renewable 90-day limit they are permitted to stay in the U.S. Patients who use the VWP MUST leave the U.S. once the 90-day period has expired and return to their country of origin (not border countries) to get a new entry under this program.

Humanitarian parole, also known as “Humanitarian Visa”

When the U.S. Department of State, through its consulate abroad, denies an applicant a B-2 visa, some applicants try to enter the U.S. by applying for Humanitarian Parole. This type of visa is issued by the Department of Homeland Security. A U.S. resident or U.S. citizen must sponsor the applicant. Complete information on obtaining Humanitarian Parole can be found at:

<http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.eb1d4c2a3e5b9ac89243c6a7543f6d1a/?vgnnextoid=accc3e4d77d73210VgnVCM100000082ca60aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=accc3e4d77d73210VgnVCM100000082ca60aRCRD>

Humanitarian Parole, also incorrectly called “Humanitarian Visa,” is NOT recommended for patients who need to remain or receive treatment at NIH for an extended period of time. Once the time limit granted on the Humanitarian Parole expires, it is very difficult, and sometimes impossible, to obtain extensions of time. In that case, the applicant will need to return to his country of origin.

Special note regarding international patients and their family members on B-2 visas who wish to enroll in primary, secondary or university studies while being treated at the NIH

Due to U.S. Federal laws, international patients and their family members on B2 visas may not enroll in primary, secondary or university studies.

Is it permissible to enroll in school while in B-1/B-2 status?

Before enrolling in classes, individuals who are in B-1 or B-2 status must first acquire F-1 (academic student) or M-1 (vocational student) status. Enrolling in classes while in B-1/B-2 status will result in a status violation. Individuals in B-1 or B-2 status, who have violated their nonimmigrant status by enrolling in classes, are not eligible to extend their B status or change to F-1 or M-1 status. These regulations provide no exceptions. In addition, enrolling a child in classes may cause them and their family members to be refused a visa to enter the U.S. in the future.

Please note: This information is provided for your assistance. No warranty is provided as to its accuracy or usefulness. It is not meant to replace the information from Federal agencies responsible for immigration services.

This information is prepared specifically for persons taking part in clinical research at the National Institutes of Health Clinical Center and may not apply to patients elsewhere. If you have questions about the information presented here, talk to a member of your health care team.

Products/resources named serve as examples and do not imply endorsement by NIH. The fact that a certain product/resource is not named does not imply that such product/resource is unsatisfactory.

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Questions about the Clinical Center?
<http://www.cc.nih.gov/comments.shtml>



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