

New Zealand Health System

OVERVIEW OF THE NEW ZEALAND HEALTH SYSTEM

In New Zealand, your GP is generally your first point of call for medical treatment. They may refer you to a hospital or specialist if appropriate.

While there is a fee for visiting GPs, Accident and Medical Centres and other private specialist services, hospital or specialist treatment provided through a public hospital in New Zealand is generally free if you are a NZ Citizen, a Permanent Resident, or hold a 2-year work permit. There are also private hospitals and specialists, which you can use if you are prepared to pay or have private medical insurance.

You are encouraged to enrol with a GP in New Zealand. The GP can help to keep you healthy and well. He/she can help you access other health services such as those related to women's health and immunisation, as well as support you to manage any health conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure. He/she can also help support you to quit smoking, along with providing you with other healthy lifestyle advice. Your GP will also ensure that you get any medical investigations (such as X-Rays, blood tests and ultrasound) that you may need. If needed, he/she will refer you to specialists for assessment and treatment, ensuring that you get the care that you need for your health.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU ARE UNWELL



If you are not seriously ill and just need a general health assessment care

- Go to a GP (general practitioner)

To find a suitable GP you could:

- ask your friends or check the telephone directory
- Ring your local Citizen Bureau Advice (CAB) or Healthline 0800 611 116
- If you are in Auckland, you can find a list of doctors in your area by visiting <http://www.yourlocaldoctor.co.nz/> (in English)
<http://chinese.yourlocaldoctor.co.nz/> (in Chinese)
<http://korean.yourlocaldoctor.co.nz/> (in Korean)

You can also go to Accident and Medical centres when your GP is not available during the weekends or after hours (at night and early morning).

If you are seriously unwell or if your condition is so serious that you cannot walk or drive, or when you have an accident

- Go to the nearest local Accident & Medical Centre or a public hospital emergency department
- Call an ambulance if it is an emergency (e.g. when you have a heart attack) – **Dial 111**.



Hospital emergency services operate 24/7. You can visit a Hospital's Emergency Department without GP referral if it is an emergency situation. This service is for patients with medical emergencies only and patients with serious condition are given priority for treatment.



If you need to see a specialist, go to a GP for advice and referral. Your GP will refer you to a public hospital or private specialist when further diagnosis or treatment is required. *Please note that not all services are provided by public hospitals.*

Healthline: 0800 611 116

You can also call the Government's Healthline service (0800 611 116), which provides free advice if you're:



- feeling unwell – but not sure whether you need to see a doctor
- needing some urgent advice about a family member or friend who is sick
- on holiday and want to know where the nearest doctor or pharmacy is.

The free health advice service is available 24/7 (Language support is available between 9am to 6pm)

Fees

- There is no charge for attending a public hospital if you have permanent residence, if you are a NZ citizen or have a work permit valid for two years. Charges may apply otherwise.
- If you are unsure whether you are eligible, you can check by visiting <http://www.health.govt.nz/new-zealand-health-system/eligibility-publicly-funded-health-services>
- You will need to pay the cost of GP treatment, Accident & Medical Centre or other private services. Each private clinic charges differently. However you can get a reduced cost if you register as a patient with a GP clinic or if you are a community service card holder.
- Immunisation is also free and so are some health checks for babies and young children.

Drugs or Medications

- For most people, pharmaceutical prescriptions cost no more than \$5 per item.
- Prescriptions for children under 6 years old are generally free.
- Families who get more than 20 prescription items a year are entitled to a Pharmaceutical Subsidy Card (PSC) that could reduce their charges. Ask your pharmacist about this.
- There may be an additional charge for weekend service; medicine delivery fees, or repeat prescriptions (Ask your pharmacy what the cost of the prescription is BEFORE they dispense it).



Other Medical Fees

- Fees may apply for private elective treatment laboratory tests, x-rays and other diagnostic tests.
- Special Immunisations for going overseas may be chargeable
- You do have to pay full cost if you choose to go to private health providers (such as private hospitals) for any care – unless you are covered by private health insurance.

Your GP and you

General Practitioner (GP) or Primary Healthcare Provider



Primary healthcare providers provide health checks, immunisation, pregnancy care and general health maintenance advice and treatment to keep you healthy and well. Primary health services are offered in local communities. They include General Practitioners (GPs), practice nurses, midwives, dental therapists and pharmacists.

Most GPs or primary healthcare providers are part of a Primary Health Organisation (PHO). Providers who belong to a PHO will usually have funding for a greater range of services.

- You can choose your preferred GP and enrol with a GP clinic. Your GP clinic keeps your health records and provides you services to keep you healthy and well, including prescriptions for medicines. If you reside in Auckland, you can ask for a free telephone interpreting service from your GP clinic in advance or when you arrive at the GP clinic. (Refer to the detailed GP enrolment information that follows)
- If you need publicly-funded hospital, diagnostic or a specialist assessment services, your GP will send a referral to the appropriate hospital, diagnostic or specialist service. If you need an interpreter for your hospital appointment, you should remind your GP to write it on the referral form. After your GP's referral has been sent, you will need to wait for the hospital to confirm the appointment. Appointments are given according to the priority level and you may need to wait for two to six months for an appointment.
- Once the appointment is confirmed, you will receive a letter from the hospital with more details (e.g. date, time, location, doctor's name, etc). You are encouraged to confirm your attendance by contacting the hospital with the telephone number provided on the letter.
- Most test results (eg laboratory tests, X-ray or ultrasound, blood tests) are sent to the GPs, not the patients. The GP will usually contact you very promptly if there is a serious concern about the results, but will not normally contact you if there is no concern. If you want to know your result, you will need to contact your GP.
- Please note that some specialist medical services are not available in some hospitals and you may be sent to hospitals that offer the specialist services you need.

Some common questions people have about enrolling with a GP in New Zealand are as follows:

Why should I enrol?

Answer: Having a regular doctor is important to your overall health and wellbeing. Your local doctor can help you keep healthy and well, and can often help you access other health services.

If you're enrolled with a GP practice, you get special benefits including:

- Cheaper fees at your regular doctor
- A charge of only \$5 for each prescription from your GP
- Access to free interpretation services, if required
- Your doctor's practice will include you in recalls for screening such as cervical and breast screening, as well as immunisation reminders for your children
- Additional services such as support to better manage conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure as well as advice on healthy lifestyles such as help to quit smoking
- Enrolment also encourages you to develop a strong relationship with your doctor and general practice team (People who have an ongoing relationship with their family doctor tend to get diagnosed more quickly and spend less time in hospital)

Enrolment is easy, costs nothing and benefits you, your family as well as your community.

How do I enrol?

Answer: To enrol, simply contact the practice/medical centre where your regular doctor is based. Usually you will have to complete a form which the doctor, nurse or receptionist will give you. The form will ask for your details such as name, age, date of birth, address and ethnicity. The information collected at enrolment comes under the Privacy Act 1993 and the Health Information Privacy Code 1994, so the privacy of your information is protected.

How does my enrolment benefit my community?

Answer: Most GPs in New Zealand belong to a Primary Health Organisation (PHO). PHOs aim to deliver primary healthcare services to the people in its community at an affordable cost.

By having GPs, practice nurses, Maori health providers and other primary healthcare providers working together in a PHO, the health requirements of the community the PHO serves will better met.

PHOs are funded according to the needs of their population. Essentially this means that in poorer areas, or in areas where the population is much older or has higher health needs, the GPs and other health providers can offer cheaper visits and services because they receive more public funds.

Can I enrol with two different GPs?

Answer: No. You should enrol with the practice/medical centre you use most often. This doesn't mean you can't visit another practice/medical centre, but you won't receive benefits such as cheaper visit fees.

What if I want to change my GP and enrol somewhere else?

Answer: You can leave or change your GP at any time. Simply enrol with your new GP. The change will be notified to the Ministry of Health, which will advise your old GP's PHO that you have enrolled somewhere else. They will not give the name of your new practice/medical centre or PHO. Please note that it may take some time for the transfer process to be completed. This means that you might not be able to immediately access the benefits that come with being enrolled with your GP (such as cheaper doctor visits).

What happens to my enrolment information?

Answer: When you enrol, the GP's PHO uses the information collected from you to build an enrolment register. This register is sent to the Ministry of Health where your information will remain confidential.

The Ministry of Health needs this information to calculate the funding that is given to the Primary Health Organisation, keep your details up-to-date, and monitor quality of care.

What if I don't want to enrol?

Answer: Enrolment is completely voluntary. If you choose not to enrol, you will still be able to visit any GP to get the care you need. You won't, however, receive benefits such as cheaper visit fees.

Can I enrol my children?

Answer: Yes, you can enrol any children in your care if they are 16 years of age or under. Simply ask at the practice's reception area to find out what you need to do.

Can I enrol other members of my family?

Answer: No. If they are over the age of 16, they need to enrol themselves, unless you have Power of Attorney or you are their authorised representative. You can, however, take enrolment forms and information home for other adult family members.

More information on benefits of GP enrolment is available by visiting

<http://www.yourlocaldoctor.co.nz/> (in English)

<http://chinese.yourlocaldoctor.co.nz/> (in Chinese) <http://korean.yourlocaldoctor.co.nz/> (in Korean)

District Health Boards

Health services for each district in New Zealand is organised into a District Health Board (DHB). There are 20 DHBs in New Zealand. The government funds each DHB using tax.

The DHB provides health services such as public hospitals, mental health, dental services and community health. The DHB is also a funder and pays community based providers such as PHOs to provide care and assistance to local communities.

The DHB is required to work with Maori, Pacific people and other cultural groups to make sure that the services offered are appropriate, accessible and acceptable to their needs.

A list of DHBs are published on the Ministry of Health's website <http://www.health.govt.nz/>

Public hospitals

Public hospitals and associated community services are funded by a District Health Board.

Public hospitals provide a high standard of care. Most people receive emergency health care here. Hospitals include medical, surgical, maternity, operating room, elderly care, mental health service, community health services (district nursing) and diagnostic services such as x-rays and scans.



- The emergency department treats people who have a serious accident or emergency medical event. A wait of up to six hours may occur.
- Outpatient clinics are by appointment only. Patients will be referred through their GPs, specialists and midwives
- The public hospital admits patients referred from the Emergency Department, a GP or a specialist
- There are waiting times for all elective health services (services which are not urgently required)
- Not all services are provided by public hospitals.

INTERPRETING SERVICES

All hospital and public health service have trained interpreters available free of charge.

Community health care

Along with running the public hospitals, DHBs also provide services in the community. They include:

- Care of children aged 0-5 years
- Midwifery antenatal and postnatal visits including home visits for mothers and new born babies at home, from birth up to 6 weeks
- Nursing care for people in their own home (e.g. dressings, injections)
- Nurses and community health workers who promote good health, prevent ill health and organise rehabilitation in the community
- Ambulance service

- Disability needs assessment service
- Personal care / home help / respite services
- School health services
- Dental services
- Community social support services

Health professionals providing services in the community include:

- Plunket nurses
- District nurses
- Public health nurses
- Allied Health professionals such as occupational therapist, physiotherapist and social worker
- Needs assessors
- Home helpers (personal care/ respite care)
- Dental therapists
- Community support workers

Ambulance service

In New Zealand, the ambulance service is provided by St. John's Ambulance (a charitable organisation which does not belong to hospitals or a government department).

- For NZ residents, you may need to pay part of the cost of ambulance transport not covered by government agencies
- For non-NZ residents, you may need to meet the full cost of ambulance transport. To check your eligibility please refer to the Ministry of Health website at <http://www.health.govt.nz/new-zealand-health-system/eligibility-publicly-funded-health-services>
- If the ambulance transport meets the criteria of "personal injury due to an accident" then the cost will be paid by Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC). For more information, refer to www.acc.co.nz
- The cost of ambulance transport ordered by a District Health Board (DHB) to transport patients between DHBs is normally paid by the DHB
- The cost of ambulance transport from a DHB to a private address or a non-DHB facility will be charged to the user of the service (private hire).
- For more information on charges or ambulance private hire charges please contact your nearest St John's regional office on 0800 ST JOHN (0800 785 646).

Dental Care

- Dental care is provided by private providers and must be paid for privately, except for some in-patient dental care treatment in public hospitals
- Basic dental treatment is free for children and full time students up to the age of 18.
- In some cases those above 18 who don't have their own income may qualify for free treatment.
- The cost of orthodontic treatment (braces/straightening teeth) is chargeable.
- For people on low income, and experiencing acute pain (Relief of Pain service), see your Work and Income case manager for subsidised dental service for individuals

Screening programmes

New Zealand has a number of screening programmes to detect some of the most common cancers in the country:

- **BreastScreen Aotearoa**
New Zealand's national breast screening programme provides free breast cancer checks for women aged between 45 and 69. For more information, visit www.breastscreen.govt.nz. If you live in the northern and western parts of Auckland, you can contact Asian Health Support Services to enquire and book your breast screening appointment. You will be supported by an interpreter to support your communication at the breast screen clinic. Please contact: 09 488 4663
- **National Cervical Screening Programme**
The national cervical screening programme aims to reduce the number of women in New Zealand who develop cervical cancer and who die from it each year. It is available to all women in New Zealand between 20 and 69 years old. The screening test checks for abnormal cell changes to the cervix, reducing the risk of women developing cervical cancer. For more information, visit www.cervicalscreening.govt.nz
- **Bowel Screening**
New Zealand has one of the highest bowel cancer rates in the world. Bowel screening can save lives by detecting bowel cancers at an early stage, when they can be treated more successfully. This is important, as there may be no warning signs or symptoms that bowel cancer is developing. From October 2011, men and women aged 50 to 74 who live in the [Waitemata District Health Board area](http://www.waitemata.govt.nz) (northern and western Auckland) are being invited to take part in a free programme to check for early signs of bowel cancer. It is part of a four-year pilot to test whether bowel screening should be introduced throughout New Zealand. For more information, visit <http://www.bowelscreeningwaitemata.co.nz>

You can talk to your GP if you want to access any breast, cervical or bowel screening,

Useful Links

The following information and links may have useful information for you in managing your health.

Asian Health Support Services (WDHB)

www.asianhealthservices.co.nz : for Asian Health Services information

www.asianhealthservices.org.nz : Asian Patient Support Service

www.amhcs.org.nz : Asian Mental Health Support Service

CADS Asian Counselling service: individual & family counselling available
(Face to face, phone or emails)

http://www.cads.org.nz/Asian_Korean.asp

Asian Smokefree Community service: please go to Waitemata PHO website

www.waitematapho.org.nz

Healthpoint

Find up-to-date information about GPs, hospitals & specialists, maternity services, dentists and much more.

www.healthpoint.co.nz

Breast screening services

New Zealand's national breast screening programme provides free breast cancer checks for women aged between 45 and 69.

www.breastscreen.govt.nz

Cervical screening services

The national cervical screening programme is available to all women in New Zealand between 20 and 69 years old. The screening test checks for abnormal cell changes to the cervix, reducing the risk of women developing cervical cancer.

www.cervicalscreening.govt.nz

Bowel screening services

From October 2011, men and women aged 50 to 74 who live in the [Waitemata District Health Board area](#) (northern and western Auckland) are being invited to take part in a free programme to check for early signs of bowel cancer.

www.bowelscreeningwaitemata.co.nz

Pregnancy and Newborn Screening

Screening programmes for you and your baby

www.nsu.govt.nz/current-nsu-programmes/antenatal-newborn-screening-programmes.aspx

Child immunisation

The Immunisation Advisory Centre is a source of independent information regarding immunisation and vaccine-preventable disease.

www.immune.org.nz

Finding a GP

If you live in Auckland, you can find a list of GPs close to where you live or work.

www.yourlocaldoctor.co.nz

Finding a midwife

The Maternity Services Consumer Council

www.maternity.org.nz

The New Zealand College of Midwives

www.midwife.org.nz

Finding a dentist

The Dental Council of New Zealand

www.dcnz.org.nz

Finding a physiotherapist

The New Zealand Society of Physiotherapists

www.physiotherapy.org.nz

Finding an optometrist

The New Zealand Association of Optometrists

www.nzao.org.nz

Sexual health and contraception services

Family Planning

www.familyplanning.org.nz

District Health Boards in the Auckland region

District Health Boards (DHBs) are responsible for providing, or funding the provision of, health and disability services in their district. Three DHBs operate within the Auckland region.

Auckland DHB www.adhb.govt.nz

Counties Manukau DHB www.cmdhb.org.nz

Waitemata DHB www.waitematadhb.govt.nz

Primary Health Organisations (PHOs) in Auckland

Most GPs in New Zealand belong to a Primary Health Organisation (PHO). PHOs aim to deliver primary healthcare services to the people in its community at an affordable cost.

Alliance Health Plus Trust www.alliancehealth.org.nz

Auckland PHO www.aucklandpho.co.nz

East Health Trust PHO www.easthealth.co.nz

National Maori PHO Coalition www.hauoracoalition.maori.nz

ProCare Networks Ltd www.procare.co.nz

Waitemata PHO Ltd www.waitematapho.org.nz

Citizens Advice Bureau

The Citizens Advice Bureau provides confidential information, advice and support for a wide range of issues.

www.cab.org.nz

THIS GUIDE IS COMPILED BY WAITEMATA DHB - ASIAN HEALTH SUPPORT SERVICES.

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