



02 HEALTH

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW
ABOUT THE HEALTH SYSTEM
IN NEW ZEALAND

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02 HEALTH

HEALTH

NEW ZEALAND'S PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM IS GOOD
BY WORLD STANDARDS.

Comprehensive life-long medical care is available to everyone. All essential health care is provided free through the public health system. This means that while some routine services, such as visits to local doctors and dentists, have to be paid for, more costly services, such as hospital treatment are, with minor exceptions, available free to all residents.



UNDER NEW ZEALAND'S
PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM,
ALL ESSENTIAL HOSPITAL
TREATMENT IS FREE
TO ALL RESIDENTS.

PUBLICLY FUNDED HEALTH SERVICES INCLUDE:

- FREE PUBLIC HOSPITAL TREATMENT
- FREE TREATMENT AT PUBLIC HOSPITAL 24-HOUR ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY (A&E) CLINICS
- SUBSIDIES ON PRESCRIPTION ITEMS
- SUBSIDISED FEES FOR VISITS BY FAMILY MEMBERS TO GENERAL PRACTITIONERS (GPs)
- SUBSIDISED FEES FOR VISITS TO PHYSIOTHERAPISTS, CHIROPRACTORS AND OSTEOPATHS WHEN REFERRED BY A GP
- FREE OR SUBSIDISED HEALTH CARE FOR THOSE SUFFERING FROM ACUTE OR CHRONIC MEDICAL CONDITIONS
- NO CHARGE FOR MOST LABORATORY TESTS AND X-RAYS, EXCEPT AT PRIVATELY OPERATED CLINICS
- NO CHARGE FOR HEALTH CARE DURING PREGNANCY AND CHILDBIRTH, UNLESS PROVIDED BY THE PRIVATE MEDICAL SECTOR
- NO CHARGE FOR GP REFERRALS TO A PUBLIC HOSPITAL FOR TREATMENT
- FREE PRESCRIPTION MEDICINES FOR ALL PUBLIC HOSPITAL PATIENTS
- SUBSIDIES FOR CHILDREN UNDER SIX FOR VISITS TO THE DOCTOR AND FOR PRESCRIPTIONS
- FREE BASIC DENTAL CARE FOR ALL SCHOOL CHILDREN
- FREE BREAST SCREENING FOR WOMEN AGED BETWEEN 50 AND 64.



YOUR FIRST POINT OF CONTACT WITH THE HEALTH SYSTEM WILL PROBABLY BE YOUR GP (GENERAL PRACTITIONER), ALSO KNOWN AS YOUR FAMILY DOCTOR. NEW ZEALAND HAS ABOUT 3,200 GPs. THESE ARE LOCATED IN ALMOST EVERY CITY, SUBURB AND TOWN THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. LOCAL GPs ARE LISTED IN THE FRONT OF THE TELEPHONE BOOK, UNDER 'REGISTERED MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS & MEDICAL CENTRES'.

GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

Registration

Registering with a GP is free and easy. Simply provide the doctor's receptionist with your address, phone number, and the names and ages of your family. Also provide any medical records in English and details of any health problems.

You can choose which GP to register with, even if that doctor is not in your suburb. So, if you would prefer to deal with a woman GP or a GP who shares your national or ethnic background, you are quite free to choose any doctor you wish. You are also free to change your GP at any time.

Opening hours

Most GPs are open from 8:00am-6:00pm – these are known as surgery hours. Some practices are also open one or two evenings a week, and sometimes on Saturday mornings.

Emergencies

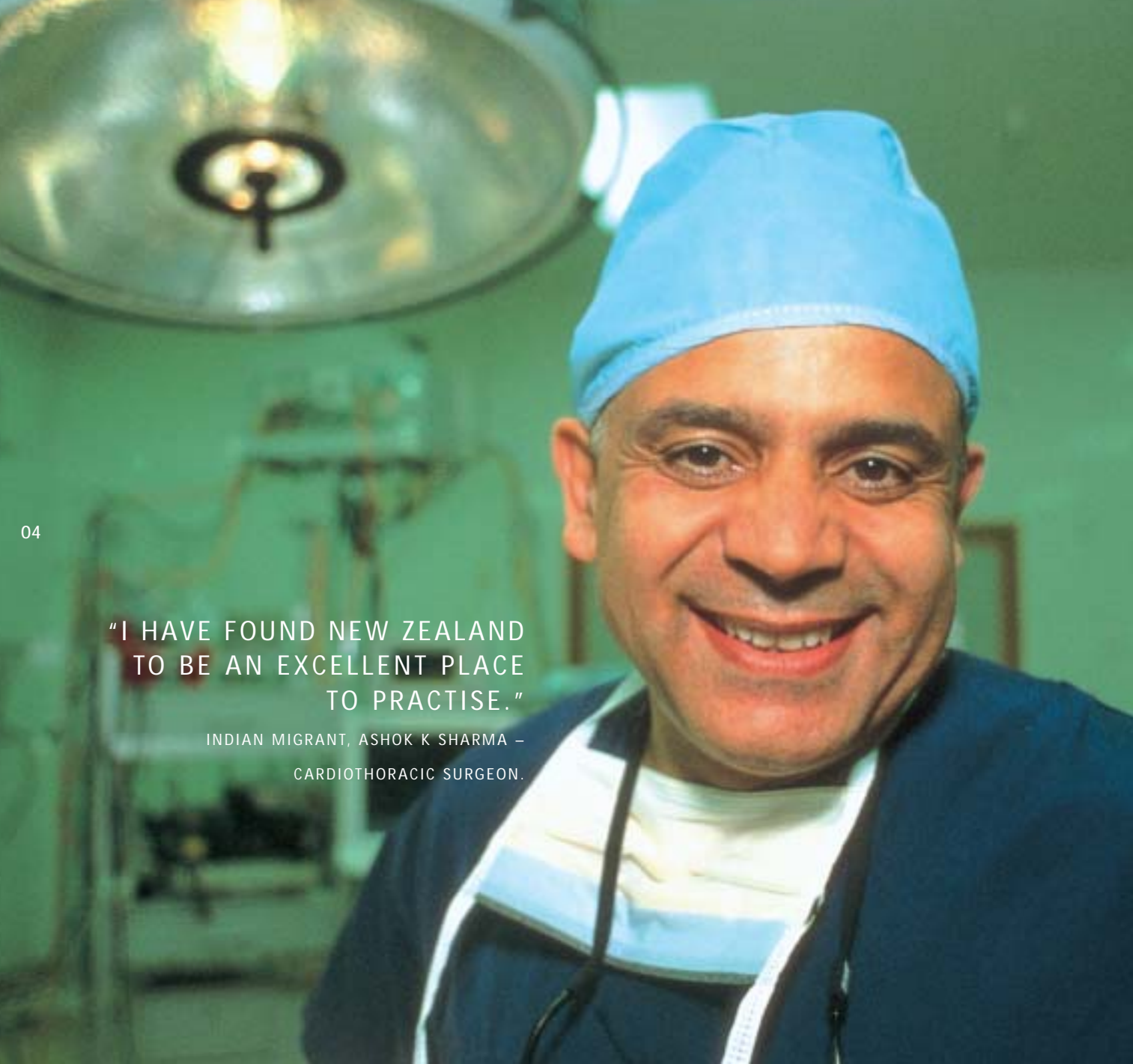
In emergencies, most GPs will either provide an immediate appointment or make home visits – sometimes referred to as house calls – any time during the day or night.

Medical examinations

You have the right to have a friend or support person with you during medical examinations. Women patients may also request that a female nurse or other female staff member be present during examinations by a male nurse or doctor. Routine services such as cervical screening, blood pressure checks, and immunisation are often conducted by the GP's Practice Nurse.

Costs

The Government partly subsidises the cost of GP care for some patients, while others pay the full cost of \$45 to \$55 a visit. Visits to a GP on the weekend or at night usually cost \$10 to \$15 extra. The Government pays \$35 of the fee for children under six; many doctors do not charge a fee on top of this, which means the visit costs you nothing. The subsidy for children aged 6-17 years is \$15. If you are a beneficiary, or on a low income, you may be eligible for a *Community Services Card*. This entitles adults to a \$15 and children over six to a \$20 subsidy on GP visits. Similar subsidies are available with a *High Use Health Card* for people with conditions requiring frequent medical care.



"I HAVE FOUND NEW ZEALAND
TO BE AN EXCELLENT PLACE
TO PRACTISE."

INDIAN MIGRANT, ASHOK K SHARMA –
CARDIOTHORACIC SURGEON.

SPECIALISTS AND PRIVATE HEALTH SERVICES

Should you require specialist medical care, you will need a 'referral' from your GP. If you prefer a private specialist you (or your insurer) will be required to pay all fees.

The public specialist health system is free, but timing of consultations and treatments is dependent on the status of your condition relative to other patients. Waiting times vary according to area and type of service.

HOSPITALS

New Zealand has 85 public hospitals, including some with specialised facilities for the elderly and people with disabilities.

Free comprehensive service

With minor exceptions, such as some kinds of cosmetic surgery, hospital treatment is provided free of charge. Nobody can be refused emergency care because they cannot pay. If they are not a New Zealand resident, they may have to pay for some services. Waiting times for essential surgery vary from hospital to hospital. If your case is urgent, you will be put on an urgent waiting list.

Interpreting services

Most of the bigger public hospitals have an interpreter service for patients whose first language is not English, but patients can use family members or friends as interpreters if they wish. Some areas offer an interpreter service free of charge.

Ambulance services

Ambulances are provided by non-profit, community-based services in most parts of the country. Although they do not operate as businesses, they may make a part-charge, between \$45 and \$67.50, to help with running costs.

WHERE TO FIND HEALTH SERVICES

General Practitioners (family doctors), Specialists, After Hours and other Medical Centres are listed in the front section of *The Telephone Book* under 'Registered Medical Practitioners & Medical Centres'.

Public and Private Hospitals, Residential Care Centres, After Hours Pharmacists, Registered Nurses and Midwives and Specialist Clinics are listed in the front section of *The Telephone Book* under 'Hospitals & other health service providers'.

Physiotherapists, Dentists, Chiropractors, Osteopaths, Opticians, Pharmacists and Natural Therapists are listed under their respective sections in the *Yellow Pages*.



“HERE PATIENTS CAN EITHER
HAVE THEIR BABY AT HOME
OR IN HOSPITAL – BOTH ARE
EQUALLY ACCEPTABLE.”

SOUTH AFRICAN MIGRANT,
MAGDALENE LE GRANGE.

MATERNITY CARE

The care needed during pregnancy and childbirth is free. This covers everything from the diagnosis of pregnancy to pre- and post-natal care for mother and baby. You can choose to have your baby at home, although most babies are born in hospital. There is no charge for hospital stays, which generally last from two to five days. Women who have miscarriages are also cared for without charge. Approved abortions are free.

Midwives

Most women are cared for throughout their pregnancy and at the birth by an independent midwife, though some women choose a local maternity hospital, or a GP who provides maternity care. If women need specialist care they can choose to be referred to a free hospital clinic or to a private specialist.

Specialist care

Should your family doctor, or a midwife, refer you to specialist services within the public system, these will be provided free of charge.

If you choose a private specialist for your maternity care, you will have to pay all fees.

Further information is available from any GP or Midwifery Centre listed under ‘Registered Medical Practitioners and Medical Centres’ in *The Telephone Book*. A Maternity Helpline is also available, Freephone: 0800 686 223 (0800 MUM2BE).



Family planning

It is common for *Family Planning Services* to be provided by GPs before pregnancy and by midwives after the birth of the child. Most towns also have *Family Planning Association* clinics which provide advice to single and married people, regardless of whether they are parents or not. The Government helps with the costs of these services which are provided free of charge to people under 22 years and to holders of *Community Services Cards*.

CHILD HEALTH

Many health services for children are free. These include immunisation against serious diseases, regular school check-ups of eyesight and hearing, and visits to the doctor. Basic dental care is also free while children are at school.

Well Child Care Service

Well Child is a free service designed to ensure that parents receive support in all aspects of their child's development. Assistance is provided through programmes on:

- Health Education and Health Promotion
- Health Protection and Clinical Assessment
- Family Care and Support.

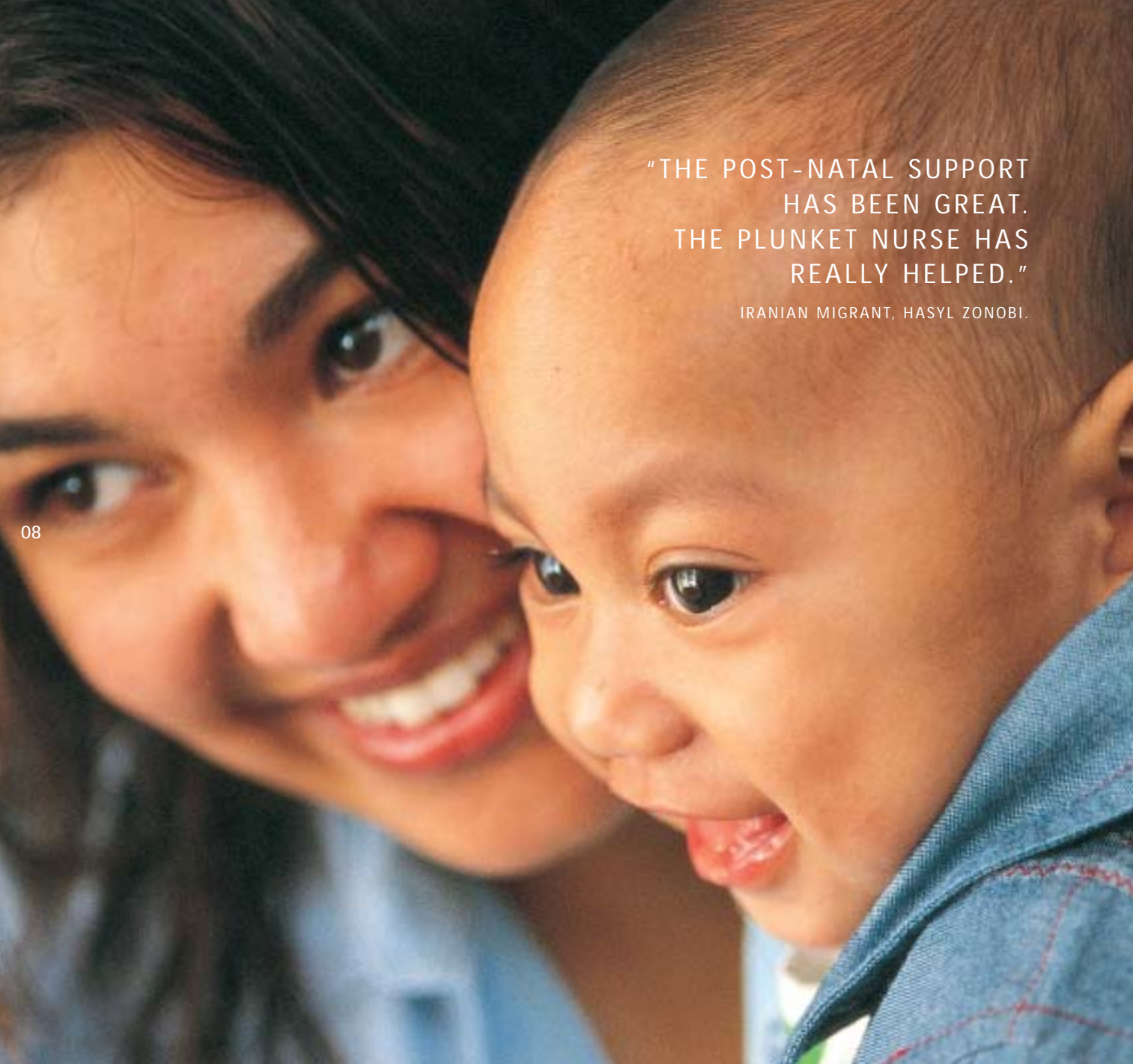
Information is available from GPs and local Medical Centres or Freephone: 0800 686 223

Plunket Society

The Plunket Society provides free care for mothers and babies. This includes child health and development checks, and parenting advice. You can either arrange for home visits by a Plunket nurse, or visit one of the many clinics located throughout the country. Plunket also has a car seat rental service which provides safety restraints for babies and small children. The use of car seats and safety restraints for children and babies is compulsory by law.

Freephone: 0800 933 922 24-hours, seven days a week or visit: www.plunket.org.nz





"THE POST-NATAL SUPPORT
HAS BEEN GREAT.
THE PLUNKET NURSE HAS
REALLY HELPED."

IRANIAN MIGRANT, HASYL ZONOBI.

PRESCRIPTIONS

GPs do not dispense medicines directly. However, they do provide written prescriptions or scripts (orders for medicine). These are dispensed by registered pharmacists. Usually your GP will direct you to a particular pharmacist, but you are also free to choose your own. There are plenty of outlets to choose from, since most of the bigger shopping centres include several retail pharmacies. Although you are free to present your prescription at any pharmacy, repeat prescriptions can be obtained only from the pharmacy that issued your first prescription. Otherwise, you will need to obtain a new prescription from your GP.

Standard costs

Adult New Zealanders pay between \$3-\$15 per prescription item for up to 20 items a year. If you or your family use more than 20 prescriptions, further items are free. Prescription medicine for children under six is free. *Community Services Card* and *High Use Health Card* holders pay only \$3 per item for medicines. Some medicines are subsidised, which means the Government pays part of the cost. If there is a manufacturer's premium, this is also charged in all cases, even when the prescription is free or heavily subsidised. Non-subsidised items are available at full cost.

Non-prescription medicines

Pharmacists are trained to give advice on medicines and on some health problems. They can also sell medicines that do not need a prescription. Pharmacists do not usually charge for their advice.

After hours service

If you need urgent medicine outside normal shopping hours, go to an Urgent Pharmacy. These are open until 10:00pm or 11:00pm. You will find them listed under 'Urgent Pharmacies' in the 'Hospitals & other health service providers' section in the front of the *White Pages* of *The Telephone Book*.



HEALTH COSTS

General practitioner visits

Adults	\$45-\$55
6-17 year olds	\$20
Children under 6	Free

Weekend and evening appointments may cost \$10-\$15 extra.

Subsidised prescriptions

Adult	\$15 maximum
Children	\$10 maximum

Dentist

Standard check-up	\$50-\$90
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PRIVATE HEALTH CARE

Many New Zealanders have elected to take out private health insurance because it provides access to private hospitals for the immediate treatment of non-urgent conditions.

The network of private hospitals and clinics provides a range of services that include recuperative care, elective procedures, general surgical procedures through to specialist procedures such as cardiothoracic operations. There are also private radiology clinics and testing laboratories.

Several insurance companies offer a range of health policies – from basic care to fully comprehensive cover. Policy premiums vary widely.

Even if you do have private health insurance, you are still entitled to free public health services.

Health insurance companies are listed in the *Yellow Pages* under 'Insurance – Medical'.

DENTAL CARE

Routine dental checks are provided free for all children through school clinics. Free dental treatment is also available if requested.

However, many families prefer dental work to be undertaken by a private dentist. The Government's *Dental Benefits Scheme* aims to cover the cost of this type of care for teenagers aged 13 to 18. But involvement in this subsidised scheme is voluntary and many dentists prefer not to participate. There are also restrictions on the types of dental care available. To obtain this free service you must register with a dentist who subscribes to the scheme.



The cost of emergency dental care is subsidised for people on low incomes. Some public hospitals also have dental departments that provide low-cost services to outpatients.

Except for the treatment of children under 18, dentists do not receive a government subsidy. Their charges vary widely and are generally higher than those charged by GPs. Dentists are listed in the *Yellow Pages*. Fluoridated water has been adopted as a standard dental health practice in most parts of New Zealand.

PERSONAL HELP AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mental health

Generally, mental health care is provided by public hospitals, but some community-based services are also available.

Private counselling services are also available but these are generally not subsidised and costs must be met in full. However, free counselling is available at most secondary schools and tertiary educational institutions.

PATIENT RIGHTS

All patients have certain rights when receiving a health or disability service.

- To always be treated with respect
- To not be discriminated against, pressured or taken advantage of
- To services that promote dignified and independent lives
- To be treated with care and skill and receive correctly administered treatment
- To medical staff who listen to their patients and communicate clearly
- To an interpreter if required
- To a clear explanation of their medical condition and the types of treatment available
- To an honest description of the risks and costs as well as the benefits of a proposed treatment
- To ask and receive competent answers to all questions
- To make their own decisions
- To change their minds if they have already said "yes" or "no" to a course of treatment
- To refuse to participate in teaching or research
- To have a support person present at most times
- To register a complaint.

These rights also apply to patients taking part in teaching or research.

"KEEPING ACTIVE IS EASY
– THERE ARE LOTS OF
OPPORTUNITIES. AND YOU
DON'T HAVE TO BE
RICH TO PLAY A GOOD
ROUND OF GOLF."

RETIRED BRITISH MIGRANT,
CLINTON EARP-JONES.



ACCIDENT INSURANCE

All residents are covered by government-run accident insurance.

The scheme is managed by the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) and covers the full range of personal injuries. This includes injuries suffered at work, at home or during sports or other leisure activities. Claims may also be made for personal injury caused by a medical mistake or error, sexual assault or abuse, and some work-related conditions such as occupational overuse syndrome (OOS).

In New Zealand, you cannot sue anyone for compensatory damages if you are injured. Instead, ACC helps to pay for the cost of your care.

All accident victims are entitled to free hospital treatment. ACC also subsidises all other types of treatment involving accident-related injuries, as long as the treatment is provided by registered health professionals. The patient usually pays a part-charge for the treatment.

If your injury stops you from working, ACC pays weekly compensation, usually based on 80% of your weekly income before tax. It can also help with residential nursing care, home help and childcare, as well as subsidising transport and training costs while you recover. In some cases involving permanent physical impairment, compensation, or 'lump sum', financial payments are also made.

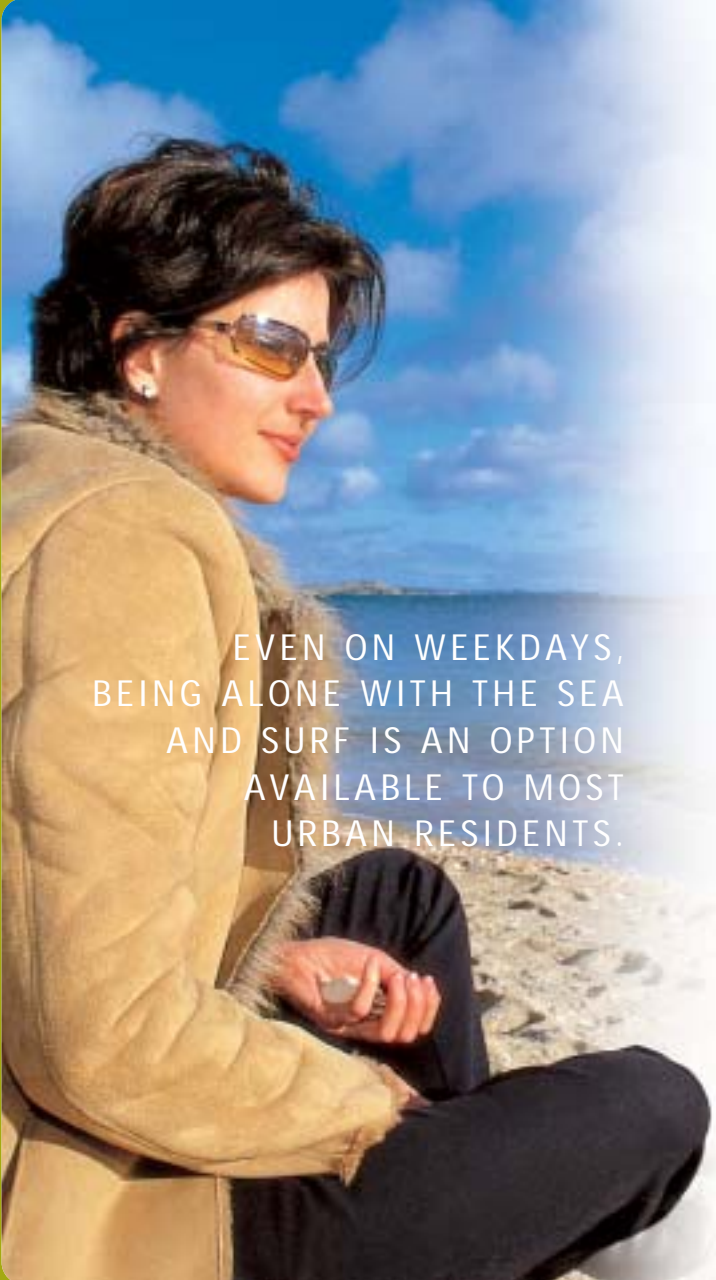
For further information, Freephone: *0800 844 657 (0800 THINKSAFE)* or visit: *www.acc.govt.nz*

SERVICES FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Assistance is available for those aged 65 or over who need help at home or may need to move to a rest home or hospital. This is provided on the basis of a 'needs assessment'. Services include home support, caregiver services and 24-hour residential care. The level of government subsidy varies according to individual circumstances.

For further information, Freephone: *0800 559 009* or visit: *www.winz.govt.nz*





EVEN ON WEEKDAYS,
BEING ALONE WITH THE SEA
AND SURF IS AN OPTION
AVAILABLE TO MOST
URBAN RESIDENTS.

HELP FOR PEOPLE ON LOW INCOMES OR WITH HIGH HEALTH NEEDS

Community Services Card

People on low incomes may be eligible for a *Community Services Card*, which entitles them to higher government subsidies on visits to their family doctor and the purchase of prescription items.

High Use Health Card

This card is for individuals who visit their family doctor 12 times or more in a 12-month period for an ongoing illness. This card also accesses higher subsidies on visits to the family doctor and on pharmaceuticals.

Pharmaceutical Subsidy Card

If you or your family have paid for 20 prescription items from 1 February in a given year, you may be eligible for a *Pharmaceutical Subsidy Card*. This card can be obtained from your local chemist/pharmacy.

For more information about the *Community Services Card*, Freephone: 0800 999 999.

For more information about the *High Use Health Card*, Freephone: 0800 252 464.

WEBSITES AND NEW ZEALAND FREEPHONES

NEW ZEALAND IMMIGRATION SERVICE SITES

Migrant Helpline

A freephone referral service that helps new migrants find the answers to questions about life in New Zealand.

The service is free and aims to put migrants in touch with the right organisations and people who are ready and waiting to help. Issues covered include: housing, health, schooling, ESOL courses, employment and many other everyday topics.

Operates from 9:00am-5:00pm, Monday to Friday.

Does not deal with business inquiries.

Freephone: 0508 55 88 55 (for calls outside Auckland)

09 914 4100 (for Auckland and all mobile phone calls).

www.immigration.govt.nz

Official site of the New Zealand Immigration Service.

Comprehensive information on all aspects of New Zealand immigration policy and procedures. All policy guidelines and most application forms can be downloaded.

In an emergency, dial 111.

To find hospitals, look under the 'Hospitals & other health service providers' section in the front of the White Pages of your Telephone Book.

To find a doctor, look under the 'Registered Medical Practitioners & Medical Centres' section in the front of the White Pages of your Telephone Book.

GOVERNMENT SITES

www.govt.nz

The official gateway to New Zealand Government online.

www.acc.govt.nz

Accident Compensation Corporation

Provides information on injury prevention, claims and care.

Freephone: 0800 844 657

www.hdc.org.nz

Health and Disability Commissioner

An independent agency dealing with patient rights.

Freephone: 0800 112 233

www.healthed.govt.nz

Provides easy access to popular brochures on health matters.

www.hrc.co.nz

Human Rights Commission

An independent agency responsible for investigating and resolving complaints about discrimination and other human rights issues.

Freephone: 0800 4 496 877 (0800 4 YOUR RIGHTS)

www.moh.govt.nz

Ministry of Health

Information on all areas of the public health system. Links to District Health Board websites – these outline the services available in your area.

Freephone: 0800 367 8473 (0800 ENQUIRE)

Maternity care

Freephone: 0800 686 223 (0800 MUM2BE)

www.plunket.org.nz

The Plunket Society provides free care for mothers and babies.

Freephone: 0800 933 922

Well Child Care Service

Free service providing support on all aspects of a child's development.

Freephone: 0800 686 223

High Use Health Card

Freephone: 0800 252 464

www.winz.govt.nz

Work and Income

Information about all benefits and allowances, including the Residential Care Subsidy and the Disability Allowance.

Freephone: 0800 559 009

Community Services Card

Freephone: 0800 999 999

Citizens Advice Bureau

All major towns in New Zealand have a Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). These provide free information and assistance on matters such as the law, translation services, social welfare, health, education, housing, budgeting, employment rights, consumer rights and personal and family issues.

The CAB's website also provides comprehensive and easily accessible information on these and other issues. The service is confidential and anyone can use it – you do not need to be a New Zealand citizen.

Freephone: 0800 367 222 (0800 FOR CAB)

Visit: www.cab.org.nz

GENERAL HEALTH SITES

Asian Healthline

Public health information service providing free advice in Mandarin, Cantonese and Korean. Available only in the Auckland region.

Freephone:

0800 375 069 (Cantonese)

0800 375 068 (Mandarin)

0800 375 067 (Korean)

www.arthritis.org.nz

Arthritis Foundation of New Zealand Inc.

www.ccs.org.nz

New Zealand CCS Inc.

Services available for the disabled and their families.

www.deaf.co.nz

Deaf Association of New Zealand Inc.

www.diabetes.org.nz

Diabetes New Zealand

Freephone: 0800 342 238

www.eldernet.co.nz

Provides information on services available to the elderly, including comprehensive information on retirement housing, and residential and hospital care.

www.everybody.co.nz

Overview of the health and social security system, and lots of consumer health information.

www.health.net.nz

The Health Network

A-Z of health guides from acne to x-rays.

Includes a directory of doctors, dentists, pharmacists etc.

www.healthpages.co.nz

Online directory of health professionals.

Advanced search allows you to locate a doctor speaking your first language.

www.healthywomen.org.nz

Government breast and cervical screening programmes.

Freephone: 0800 729 729

www.ihc.org.nz

IHC New Zealand Inc.

Services available for the intellectually handicapped and their families.

www.ps.org.nz

Presbyterian Support

Community services and counselling.

www.pvi.org.nz

Parents of Vision Impaired (NZ) Inc.

Freephone: 0800 312 019

www.rnzfb.org.nz

The Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind

Freephone: 0800 243 333

www.womens-health.org.nz/healthsystem.htm

Outline of women's health services and how to access them.

GENERAL SITES

www.consumer.org.nz

Consumers' Institute of New Zealand

Up-to-date guide to consumer health information.

www.ubd.co.nz

A comprehensive directory, listing over 159,000 businesses,

190,000 products and 320,000 trade suppliers.

Includes database of health providers. Freephone: 0800 823 225

www.yellowpages.co.nz

Telephone listings for New Zealand businesses.

Please note: Freephone numbers do not accept international calls.



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