



05 HEALTH

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



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 TO GENERAL PRACTITIONERS (GPs)
- SUBSIDISED FEES FOR SPECIALIST CARE SUCH AS PHYSIOTHERAPISTS, CHIROPRACTORS AND OSTEOPATHS WHEN REFERRED BY A GP FOR AN ACCIDENT CASE
- 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
- SUBSIDIES FOR CHILDREN UNDER SIX FOR VISITS TO THE DOCTOR AND FOR PRESCRIPTIONS
- FREE BREAST SCREENING FOR WOMEN AGED BETWEEN 45 AND 69.



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 WHITE PAGES, 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.

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 female 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. Female 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 visits for patients aged under 18 and those aged 45 and over, while others pay the full cost. Patients aged 18-44 may expect to pay between \$10.50 and \$65 depending on where they live. However, only a small number of 'Access PHOs' in poorer areas would charge fees within the lower range. There is an additional charge, usually ranging from \$10-\$25, for house calls. Visits to a GP on the weekend or at night are also more expensive and can cost up to double the usual fee. The Government pays \$38 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.

Lower charges may apply if you have a Community Services Card or High Use Health Card.

Primary Health Organisations (PHOs)

Reduced charges are available to patients registered with a PHO. Most GPs belong to PHOs and when you register with a GP you will usually also be enrolled as a member of the PHO. If your GP is not a member of a PHO, you can transfer to one who is although you can only enroll in one PHO at a time. PHOs receive government funding on the basis of need with poorer areas attracting the largest subsidies. Consequently, costs vary from area to area.

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 health system is free, but you may be put on a waiting list depending on the status of your condition relative to other patients.

HOSPITALS

New Zealand has 40 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 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 interpreting 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 interpreting service free of charge.

Ambulance services

Ambulances are provided by non-profit, community-based services. In some regions services are free; in others there may be a part-charge for emergency call-outs. Charges vary according to location; the highest rate for a medical emergency call-out is \$67.50.

WHERE TO FIND HEALTH SERVICES

General Practitioners (family doctors), Specialists, After Hours and other Medical Centres are listed in the front section of the *White Pages* 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 *White Pages* 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*.

Healthline

For free health advice and reference to local health services:
Freephone: 0800 611 116 – 24 hours, seven days a week.



"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 & Medical Centres' in the *White Pages*. 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 at the lower cost of \$15 to holders of *Community Services Cards*.

CHILD HEALTH

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

WellChild Care Service

WellChild 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.

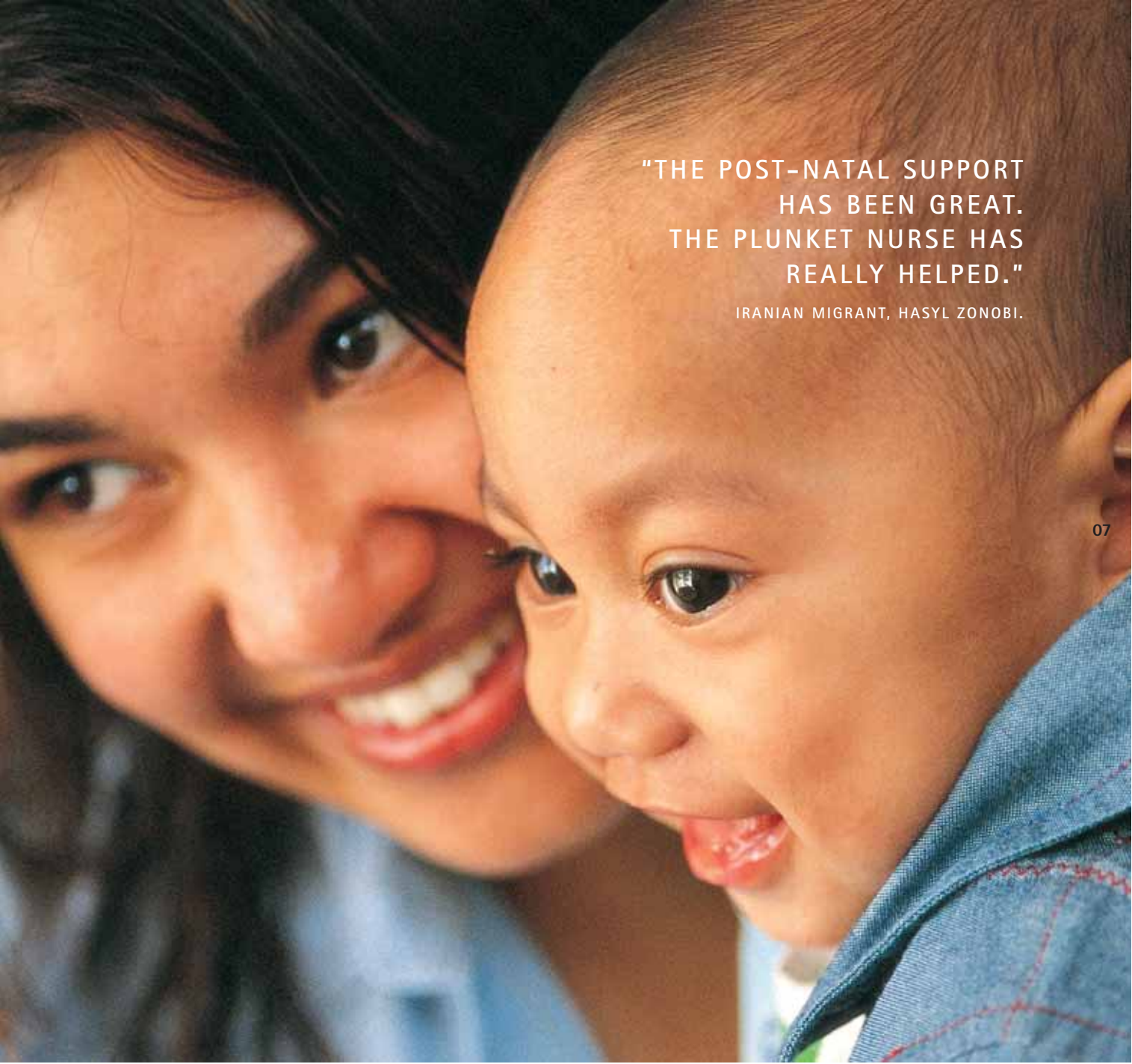
Information is available from GPs and local Medical Centres, at www.wellchild.org.nz or freephone: 0800 686 223 (0800 MUM2BE).

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. Every child is entitled to eight WellChild visits, where your child's health, development and well-being will be assessed and you will be provided with ongoing parent education and support. Additional visits are provided for families with high need or first time parents. Your visits with the Plunket Nurse will monitor your child's health and development. 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 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. 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

Prescription medicines are generally free for children under six years old. For everyone else, prescription costs are \$15 or less for medicines that are fully subsidised by the health service. Medicines that are not fully subsidised may cost more. Non-subsidised items are charged at full cost although alternative subsidised medicines are usually available.

Lower prescription charges may apply if you have a Community Services Card, a High Use Health Card or a Pharmaceutical Subsidy Card. For information on these cards see Patient Rights and Extra Help.

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*.



HEALTH COSTS

General practitioner visits

Children under 6	Many doctors don't charge for this service
6-17 year olds	\$10.50-\$25
17-44 year olds	\$15.50-\$65
45 and over	\$15.50-\$35

House calls may cost from \$10-\$25 extra.

Visits to a GP on the weekend or at night can cost up to double the usual fee.

If you think you are paying too much for visits to your doctor, first, talk to the Practice or PHO Manager. If this does not resolve matters, contact your local District Health Board. See the 'Hospitals & other health service providers' section in the front of the *White Pages*.

Subsidised prescriptions

Six and over	\$15 maximum
Under six	free

Dentist

Standard check-up, x-ray and clean	\$75-upwards
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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, and 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 comprehensive cover. Policy premiums vary widely.

Even if you do have private health insurance, you are still entitled to free public health services which cover all accident and emergency care.

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. For details of local school clinics and dentists offering free services to adolescents, contact the Dental Service Manager in your local District Health Board (see the 'Hospitals & other health service providers' section in the front of the *White Pages*).

Most public hospital dental units provide some basic and emergency services for people on low incomes. A small fee is usually charged for these services. However, their priority is to provide care for in-patients undergoing treatment for other conditions. The Accident Compensation Corporation meets the cost of care resulting from accidental injuries.

Except for the treatment of children under 18, dentists do not receive a government subsidy. Their charges vary widely and are 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 education institutions.

PATIENT RIGHTS

All patients have certain rights when receiving a health or disability service. You have the right to:

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

ACCIDENT INSURANCE

Residents are covered for personal injury by a government-run accident insurance scheme.

The scheme is managed by the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) and covers the full range of personal injuries – whether 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 discomfort, pain and injury.

In New Zealand, you cannot generally sue anyone for compensatory damages if you are injured. Instead, ACC helps to pay for a broad range of treatment and rehabilitation services. These include free hospital treatment, the cost of treatment by registered health professionals, personal services such as residential nursing care, home help and childcare. However, patients may pay a part-charge for some treatments.

In some cases involving permanent physical impairment, compensation, or “lump sum” financial payments may also be made. If your injury stops you from working, you may be eligible for weekly compensation from ACC of up to 80% of your weekly income before tax.

For further information, freephone: 0800 844 657 (0800 THINKSAFE) or visit: www.acc.co.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.

To access state funded care at home, you will need to contact your District Health Board (listed in the 'Hospitals & other health service providers' section in the front of the *White Pages*) and ask about having a Needs Assessment Service Co-ordination (NASC) assessment.





IT'S SO WONDERFUL TO
COME HOME FROM
WORK, RELAX ON THE
DECK WITH A DRINK IN
HAND, AND HEAT UP
THE BARBEQUE

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. The Community Services Card can also be used to access secondary health services from public hospitals, including home and travel and accommodation assistance.

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 prescription items.

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*, talk to your General Practitioner.

WEBSITES AND NEW ZEALAND FREEPHONES

NEW ZEALAND NOW

www.newzealandnow.govt.nz

Government site that links you to all the information that you need to know about living and working in New Zealand.

IMMIGRATION NEW ZEALAND SITE

www.immigration.govt.nz

Official site of Immigration New Zealand.

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 for:

- Ambulance
- Fire
- Police

If you aren't sure it's an emergency contact Healthline:
Freephone: 0800 611 116 – 24 hours, seven days a week.

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

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

GOVERNMENT SITES

www.newzealand.govt.nz

The official gateway to New Zealand Government online.

www.acc.co.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 11 22 33

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 496 877

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.

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

www.wellchild.org.nz

WellChild Care Service

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

www.workandincome.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

SSNZ

SSNZ (Settlement Support New Zealand) is a government funded initiative that provides a local point of first contact for new migrants, in 19 locations throughout the country. Think of it as, "Phone a friend".

SSNZ is a FREE service for new migrants, linking you to the information you need.

PHONE 0800 SSNZ4U (0800 776 948).

VISIT WWW.SSNZ.GOVT.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.ccsdisabilityaction.org.nz

CCS Disability Action.

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.healthpages.co.nz

Online directory of health professionals.

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

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. Membership fee required, to view some material.

www.yellowpages.co.nz

Telephone listings for New Zealand businesses.

Please note: Freephone numbers do not accept international calls.

Telephone directories

In New Zealand telephone directories are referred to as the *White* and *Yellow Pages*. These terms are used throughout this guide.

The *White Pages* lists residential and business numbers in alphabetical order. It also includes special sections on Government and Medical services.

The *Yellow Pages* is a classified business directory categorised by service or product type.

There are *White* and *Yellow Pages* for each region – there is no national directory. For national listings, visit: www.whitepages.co.nz or www.yellowpages.co.nz