



# Healthcare in Queensland

A guide for Queensland humanitarian program arrivals

English



Queensland  
Government





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Remember to check the **Glossary** (list of definitions) on page 16 for underlined words.



# Interpreters

## How can I get an interpreter?

Free interpreting services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to access healthcare such as an ambulance, hospitals, doctors, and pharmacists.

It's free for you.

If you need an interpreter, ask the health worker to organise one for you. Remember to ask for the language that you speak. You can also call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) directly on **13 14 50** and they will connect you with the service.



When you see this icon,  
a free interpreter service  
is available to you.



# Health cards

## What does a Medicare card do?

A Medicare card can help health services understand who you are and help with costs of your medical appointments.

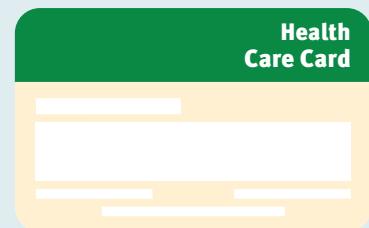
When you arrive in Australia, you will be sent a Medicare card.



*Medicare card*

## What does a Health Care card do?

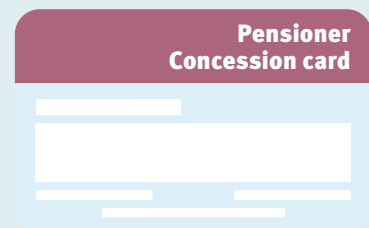
A Health Care card is for people with a lower income and can help you to access some health services and get some prescription medicines at a cheaper price. Usually, this card does not help with the costs of vitamins and supplements.



*Health Care card*

## What does a Pensioner Concession card do?

A Pensioner Concession card is for people over 60 years old and helps you get cheaper healthcare, prescription medicines and some discounts.



*Pensioner Concession card*

You may need to pay full price for some prescribed medicines even with these cards. You should take these cards with you to all your health appointments and the pharmacy.

If you don't have one of these cards you will need to pay full cost for medicine at the pharmacy and at some health services. Always ask if you are not sure.

People seeking asylum in Australia who are not eligible for a Medicare card can access public hospitals in Queensland free of charge.



# Doctors & medical care

## How can I get help if I am sick?



See a GP



Go to the pharmacy for advice



Call Triple Zero '000' in an emergency



It's free for you to ask for an interpreter when you talk to a GP, pharmacist, ambulance or call 13 HEALTH.

If unsure, call 13 HEALTH on **13 43 25 84** for advice from a registered nurse, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

## Who is a GP?

A general practitioner is often called a 'GP' or 'family doctor' and is often the first person you go to with a health problem. You will usually need to make an appointment to see a GP.

If you need an interpreter, tell the receptionist when you make your appointment.

## What can a GP do?

- Give you advice about your health, treat your illnesses and injuries and give ongoing medical care
- Refer you to other professionals such as allied health or specialists, if needed. This is called a 'referral'
- Provide legal documents like medical certificates
- Help you with chronic conditions and preventative health screening (such as cancer checks and blood pressure)
- Provide care during pregnancy.

## How much does a GP cost?

If you have a Medicare card or know your Medicare number this can help with some or all of the costs to see a GP.

Ask if your GP practice 'bulk bills'. If they don't, you will need to pay a 'gap fee' to see a GP even if you have a Medicare card.

Please contact the practice if you cannot go to your appointment, as you may be charged if you don't attend.

You could have a telehealth appointment which means you can talk to the doctor on the phone, instead of a face-to-face appointment. Ask your GP if you can access this service.

# Specialist

## How can I see a specialist?

1. Your GP will do the initial checks and decide if you need to see a specialist.
2. The GP will write a letter (referral) to refer you to a specialist.
3. Ask your GP for more information on which specialist you can choose to be referred to and how your referral will be processed.

While you are waiting to see the specialist it is important to tell the GP if your condition changes so they can look after you and update the specialist if needed.

You can see a specialist for free in the public system and there may be a wait. The time you will need to wait will depend on the urgency of your medical condition. You can see a private specialist for a fee. Ask about the costs and if they offer any payment plans.



**It's free for you to ask for an interpreter when you visit a specialist. You can ask for an interpreter at the time you book your appointment.**

# Emergency

## What should I do if I am seriously sick or injured?

In Australia, **Triple Zero '000'** is the emergency number to call for police, fire and ambulance service.

You should call an ambulance if you have any of these symptoms:

- bad chest pain
- sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arms or legs
- bleeding that cannot be controlled
- trouble breathing
- a sudden collapse or fall
- severe burns.

The ambulance service is not for minor injuries or illnesses. If you're not sure if your medical condition or injury is an emergency, call *13 HEALTH* on **13 43 25 84**.

The ambulance is a free service if you live in Queensland.

You can also go to your local hospital emergency department (ED). This is a free service. **EDs are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.**



**It's free for you to ask for an interpreter when calling the ambulance or going to the emergency department.**

# Emergency

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Calling an ambulance





# Hospitals

## What if I have to stay in hospital?

You may need to stay in hospital if you are seriously sick or injured, or if you need surgery.

When you stay in hospital, the hospital staff will support and care for you, and make sure you have everything you need. You can ask for pain medication, an interpreter, sanitary items, and food and drink for free.

## What if my child has to stay in hospital overnight?

Only one adult can stay with a child overnight. Other family members can visit. Check with the nurse about hospital visiting hours.

If you are worried about your child's condition while they are in hospital, it is important to tell the hospital staff, as you know your child best.

## Know your rights in hospitals

The health worker looking after you may not know how you are feeling. That is why it is important for you to let them know so they can give you the best care that you need. If you feel like you or your family member are not getting better or improving as expected, you can use a Ryan's Rule review to get more help.



It's free for you to ask for an interpreter while in hospital.



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About Ryan's Rule



# Medicines

## How can I get medicine?

Pharmacists work at a ‘pharmacy’ or ‘chemist’. Pharmacists can:

- Provide advice about minor illnesses or injuries
- Supply medicines when your GP gives you a prescription (sometimes called a ‘script’)
- Sell medicines that do not need a prescription from a GP
- Give you some types of vaccinations, including the influenza vaccine.

You can ask your pharmacist for generic medicines. They have the same active ingredient as the brand-name medicines, but are usually cheaper. In Australia, pharmacists can only sell generic medicines if they work the same way as the brand-name medicine, so you know they are safe to use.

Do not share prescription medications even if you have the same sickness.



**It's free for you to ask for an interpreter at a pharmacy.**





# Mental wellbeing

## Additional support

### In an Emergency

24 hours a day, 7 days a week



**Ambulance**

☎ 000

### Urgent support

24 hours a day, 7 days a week



**Lifeline**

☎ 13 11 44



**1300 MH CALL**

☎ 1300 642 255



**Suicide Helpline  
Call Back Service**

☎ 1300 659 467

### Talk to your GP

Book an appointment with your GP and talk about your mental wellbeing treatment options. They can provide advice, [mental health treatment plans](#) and refer you to other services if needed.

### QPASTT

See a counsellor who specialises in the impact of torture and trauma.

🕒 Monday - Friday 9:00am–5:00pm

☎ (07) 3391 6677

### Head to Health

Talk to a mental health professional on the phone.

🕒 Monday - Friday 8:30am–5:00pm

☎ 1800 595 212

### Multicultural Connect Line

Speak to somebody if you are worried or stressed.

🕒 Monday - Friday 9:00am–4:30pm

☎ 1300 079 020

### Queensland Transcultural Mental Health Centre

Speak with a mental health clinician for advice and support.

🕒 Monday - Friday 8:30am–4:30pm

☎ (07) 3317 1234

### Kids Helpline

Telephone and online counselling for young people aged 5-25.

🕒 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

☎ 1800 551 800

### MensLine

Telephone and online counselling support for men.

🕒 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

☎ 1300 78 99 78

### Beyond Blue

Chat to a counsellor online.

🌐 [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

### DVConnect

Telephone support for people experiencing family or domestic violence.

☎ **DV Womensline** - 1800 811 811

☎ **DV Mensline** - 1800 600 636



**All of these services are free and confidential, and it's free to ask for an interpreter when calling.**

# Health checks

## Regular health checks

Regular health checks or ‘screens’ can find early signs of health issues. Finding problems early means you can get treatment sooner. Many factors, such as your age, health, family history and lifestyle choices, impact on how often you need check-ups.

There are different health checks at different ages. You should talk to your GP about recommended health checks or screening programs.

New arrivals through the humanitarian program can get a free **Refugee Health Assessment** at a GP.

Scan the QR code below to read more about the Refugee Health Assessment, including why you should have one and what to expect.

The Refugee Health Assessment will take 2-3 appointments so at the end of your appointment, don't forget to ask if you have another appointment that you need to attend.

## Hearing checks

If you are worried about your hearing, you can go to an ‘audiologist’ to check your hearing.

Not all audiology appointments are free. Check with your GP before your appointment.

The Queensland Healthy Hearing Program provides free hearing tests to all babies born in Queensland hospitals (public and private). The program also provides additional services for children under 16 years.

## Recommended health checks to prevent illness



Regular health checks



Hearing checks



Oral health (teeth) checks



Eye checks



Cancer screening

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Refugee Health Assessment







Ask for an interpreter at your dentist appointment, it will be free at public oral health services.

## Oral health (teeth) checks

When you first arrive in Australia through the humanitarian program, you can get your teeth checked and treated by a dentist for free with the Queensland public dental service.

If you need ongoing checks and treatment and have a Health Care card or Pensioner concession card, you can make an appointment with a public oral health centre for free near you by calling **1300 300 850**. Wait times can be long.

Children up to 17 years old can have check-ups and basic treatment for free at a public oral health centre.

If you don't have a Health Care card, you will need to make an appointment at a private dentist and pay for any services. Some dental treatments can only be done at a private dentist.

## Eye checks

It is important to have a regular eye check because it's not always obvious when you have an eye problem. You will go to an 'optometrist'.

An eye check will tell you if your eyes are healthy or if you need other treatments including glasses.

People under 65 years can get a free eye check **every three years** with a Medicare card. People over 65 years with a Medicare card can get a free eye check **every year**.

You may be able to get free basic glasses every two years if you have a Health Care card. Ask your GP or optometrist about the Spectacle Supply Scheme.



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More information and locations in Queensland



## Cancer screening

Cancer can take a long time to develop, and screening can find cancer while it is still in its early stages and when a person doesn't have any symptoms.

By finding cancer at an early stage, there is a better chance that treatment will work, and the person will survive. You can get checked for different kinds of cancers but there are three national cancer screening programs in Australia that you can easily do:

	Breast cancer		Bowel cancer	Cervical cancer
Age	50-74	40-49 or 75+	50-74	25 – 74 years old and have had any sexual contact
How	BreastScreen Queensland (BSQ)	Book an appointment with a GP	Get a free bowel cancer screening kit in the mail	Book an appointment with a GP
Cost	Free with a Medicare card	GP may charge for consult to refer	Free with a Medicare card	Some GPs provide this for free. Ask about the cost when you book an appointment
How often	Every two years	Talk to your GP	Every two years	Every five years
Resources				



If you're worried or have symptoms at any age, speak to your GP.



# Vaccinations

Vaccinations are important to protect you and your family from illnesses.

Vaccinations are sometimes required:

- To enrol in school and childcare
- For travel
- For some jobs.

Missing vaccinations may affect your Centrelink payments if you are a parent.

## Why get vaccinated?

Talk to your GP about what vaccinations you and your family need and how and when to get them.

If you can give your GP a translated record of you and your child's vaccines, they may not need to be repeated. You can get your records translated for free.

For more information about translation services visit the [Department of Home Affairs website](#).



**Ask for an interpreter at your vaccination appointment.**



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Free Translating Service



# Glossary

## Allied health professional

Trained healthcare professionals who can treat and help you take care of your physical or mental health such as physiotherapists, psychologists, and dietitians.

## General practitioner / GP

A general practitioner also known as 'GP' or 'family doctor' is usually the first person you go to when you are feeling sick or unwell. They are doctors who have focused their training to look after people of all ages with all different conditions. They work at GP practices or medical centres in the community.

## Specialist

A doctor that has focused their training on a specific type of medicine for a particular area of the body like the heart (cardiologist), a skill set like surgery or particular age group like child health (paediatrics).

## Bulk billing

Bulk-billing is a service that health professionals such as doctors, specialists, optometrists, and dentists can choose to offer. If your health professional offers bulk billing, the full cost of your appointment is covered by Medicare.

## Gap fee / Medicare gap

Sometimes you need to pay the whole fee for health services and Medicare will refund some of the cost. The amount you pay is called the 'Medicare gap'.

## Referral

A letter from your doctor to a specialist asking for an appointment for you. If the referral is to a specialist in a public hospital, the hospital will contact you to make an appointment. If it is to a private specialist, you will need to make the appointment yourself and there will be a fee.



### **Ambulance**

An ambulance is a vehicle with equipment that can provide emergency care to sick or injured people and get them to hospital quickly. Ambulances can also be used to transport patients between hospitals.

### **Emergency department**

Emergency departments treat serious or life-threatening illnesses and injuries. They are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

### **Chemist / pharmacy**

A place where you can buy medicines and other health products, for example vitamins and sunscreens. If you have a prescription for medicine from your GP, a pharmacist will give these to you. You can also buy some medicines without a prescription. They are called 'over-the-counter medicines'.

### **Prescription / script**

The document on which your doctor writes an order for medicine and which you give to a chemist or pharmacist to get the medicine.

### **Generic medicine**

Generic medicines have the same active ingredient as brand-name medicines and work in the same way. They are often cheaper than brand-name medicines. In Australia, pharmacies can only sell generic medicines if they work the same way as the brand-name medicine.

### **Active ingredient**

The main component in the medicine that makes it work.

### **Screening / screening programs**

Screening involves simple tests that look for early signs of a disease, for example cancer, before you can see or feel any changes to your body. When you find a disease like cancer early, it is easier to treat successfully.

### **Optometrist**

A person qualified to check your eyes for vision (how well you can see), eye disorders, or any other health problems.

### **Audiologist**

A person qualified to check your hearing. An audiologist identifies, manages, and assesses hearing problems.

### **Vaccination / immunisation**

Vaccines are given to children and adults, usually by injection, to prevent them from getting diseases. This can prevent the disease from developing or can make it less severe.

### **Mental health treatment plan**

A plan your GP writes with you to help support you to get better. It also can help with the costs to access support from other health professionals like psychologists and counsellors.

A mental health treatment plan can be useful for people with minor mental health conditions or serious conditions, short-term or long-term illnesses. You don't already have to be diagnosed with a mental health condition to talk to your doctor about making a mental health treatment plan.



## Important contacts

**Case Manager/Case Worker**

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**GP**

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**Nurse**

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**Dentist**

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**Other**

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**Notes**

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This resource was developed by **Mater Refugee Health** with reviews by multicultural communities and clinicians via the **Refugee Health Network Queensland**, in consultation with **Queensland Health**. It contains general health information only. Please check with your health professional for further guidance or specific advice.

This work is supported by funding from the **Australian Government** through **Brisbane South PHN**. While the Australian Government contributed funding for this material, it has not reviewed the content and is not responsible for any injury, loss or damage however arising from the use of or reliance on the information provided herein.



