

Medical Questions

The Australian Government provides help with basic medical expenses through a scheme called Medicare. You may be eligible to join Medicare and gain immediate access to health care services and programs. These include free public hospital care, help with the cost of out-of-hospital care, and subsidised medicines.

Who is eligible?

People who reside in Australia - excluding Norfolk Island - are eligible if they:

hold Australian citizenship

have been issued with a permanent visa

hold New Zealand citizenship

have applied for a permanent visa (excludes an application for a parent visa)—other requirements apply. Contact Medicare for further information.

You will need to provide documents to support your residency in Australia or your severing of ties with the previous country of residence if:

you are an Australian citizen returning to Australia to reside after living overseas for more than five years

you are a New Zealand citizen requesting enrolment as a permanent resident.

In some cases both forms of documentation may be needed.

Reciprocal Health Care Agreements—the Australian Government has signed Reciprocal Health Care Agreements with some countries. Under these arrangements, residents of these countries are entitled to restricted access to health cover while visiting Australia. For more information go to visitors travelling to Australia.

How to enrol

You should go into a Medicare office 7 to 10 days after your arrival in Australia and bring your passport or travel documents. There are also many different private health insurance options as Medicare does not provide for other services. For example: Medicare does not cover dental care, optical care or ambulance services.

In most cases, you will pay for medical care then receive a refund for some of the payment. The government provides help with medical expenses through a scheme called Medicare. Medicare delivers free public hospital care. Medicare also helps with the cost of seeing a local doctor or specialist and with paying for medicine and other treatment. You can purchase health insurance to cover costs not refunded by Medicare.

Doctors, general practitioners (GPs) and specialists, charge a fee for their service. The government returns most of the fee after you submit a claim through Medicare. Some health insurance policies assist with the gap between the doctor's fee and the Medicare refund. Some GPs bulk bill. GPs who bulk bill do not charge patients a fee. Medicare direct pays them a fixed fee per service given.

For
information on how to enrol in Medicare

See: Register
with Medicare
Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)
The
government also subsidises the cost of most medicine under the
Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). The PBS is administered by
Medicare Australia.

See: Pharmaceutical
Benefits Scheme

Private hospital care

Users pay for private hospital care. You must pay the fees for the doctor and for your stay at a private hospital. Medicare will cover some of the doctor's fee. It does not cover the hospital fees.

Ambulance

You must pay a fee to use an Ambulance. You can buy insurance for just ambulance cover.

Community health centres

Local government funds community health centres.

The
funding includes the cost of vaccination for children. The government
funds most women's health programmes. Dentists charge a fee for their
service. Some health insurance policies assist with dentist's fees.
The government helps to pay for your medication. The amount of help
varies with the need. Medicare and private health insurance provide
some coverage for alternative medicine.

Aged care

Users pay for aged care on an ability to pay basis with help from the
government.

For
more information on private health insurance

See: What
is private health insurance?

The table below provides contact details for Medicare Australia

Telephone
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In person

See:Medicare
Australia office locations
Homepage

See:Medicare
Australia
Medicare
Welcome Kit

(available in other languages)

See:Medicare
Australia Welcome Kit - Choose your language

For
information on Private Health Insurance

See:What
is Private Health Insurance?

For
any further information please see the
Beginning a Life in
Australia booklets which welcome
newly-arrived migrants to Australia. Information is provided on the
types of settlement services available and advice on where to go to
for assistance. This information is available in English and is
translated into 24 community languages for each state and territory.
See:

'Beginning
a Life in Australia' - English version

'Beginning
a Life in Australia' - 24 community languages