



Healthcare in Queensland

A guide for new Queensland arrivals

English



Queensland
Government



Artwork by Emele Tuinona.

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.

For any further enquiries, please contact the Department of Health's Strategic Communications Branch Partnerships team via engagement@health.qld.gov.au



REFUGEE HEALTH
NETWORK QUEENSLAND

Contents



Interpreters



Hospitals



Health cards



Maternity care



Doctors & medical care



Medicines



Specialists



Mental wellbeing



Urgent care



Health checks



Emergency



Vaccinations

Remember to check the **Glossary** (list of definitions) on page 19 for underlined words.

Interpreters



When you see this symbol, an interpreting service is available to you.

Free interpreting services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to access healthcare such as in public hospitals.

Your conversation with interpreters are confidential. This means they have to keep your information private.

If you need an interpreter, ask the health service to organise one for you. Remember to ask for the language that you speak (e.g. Tongan).





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.

For more information about applying for Medicare contact Services Australia Medicare Program on **132 011**.



Medicare card

What does a Health Care card do?

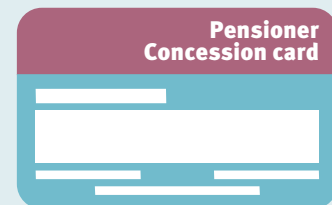
A Health Care card is for people with a lower income and can help you to access some health services and get some prescription medicines at a cheaper price. Usually, this card does not help with the costs of vitamins and supplements. Check with Centrelink if you are eligible.



Health Care card

What does a Pensioner Concession card do?

A Pensioner Concession card is for people over 60 years old with a Medicare card and helps you get cheaper healthcare, prescription medicines and some discounts. Check with Centrelink if you are eligible.



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.

Health cover for Temporary workers or PALM scheme workers

If you are on a temporary working visa and/or don't hold a Medicare card, ensure that your international health insurance cover is maintained according to your visa conditions and contact your health insurance provider to understand how your policy responds in certain situations.

If you are a PALM scheme worker you can also find helpful information on health insurance resources or contact the PALM support line on **1800 51 51 31**.

Asylum Seekers

People seeking asylum in Australia who have lodged a claim for a protection visa and don't have Medicare can access public hospitals in Queensland free of charge.





Doctors & medical care



Ask for an interpreter when you talk to a GP, pharmacist or call 13 HEALTH.

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

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 long term health 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. If you don't have a Medicare card, ask about the costs or check if your health insurance covers some of the costs.

Ask if your GP clinic '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 clinic 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.

Specialists



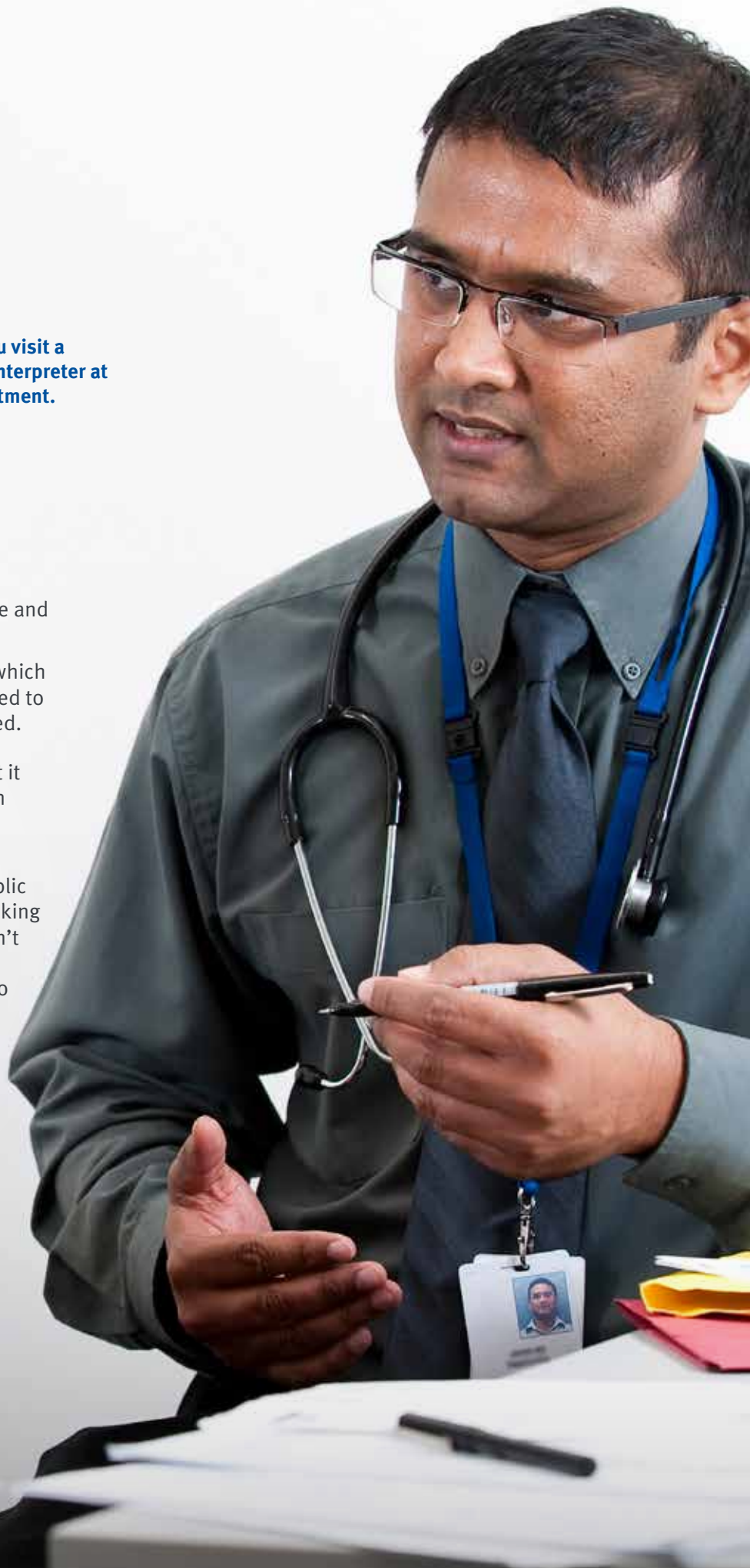
Ask for an interpreter when you visit a specialist. You can ask for an interpreter at the time you book your appointment.

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 (public for free and private for a cost).
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 if you have a Medicare card or seeking asylum but there may be a wait. If you don't have Medicare but you do have health insurance contact your health insurance to ask what is covered.



Urgent care

Medicare Urgent Care Clinics are open for extended hours, 7 days a week, for the treatment and care of minor illnesses and injuries. They are staffed by qualified doctors and nurses for walk-in, bulk-billed urgent care.

They can treat urgent but non-life-threatening illnesses and injuries and are for conditions that can't wait for a regular GP appointment but don't require a trip to emergency, such as minor infections, sprains, urinary tract infections, and minor burns.

Medicare Urgent Care Clinics may see people without Medicare for free too but check about costs before you go.

ENGLISH



Urgent Care Clinics
Information



Emergency



Ask for an interpreter when calling the ambulance or going to the emergency department.

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.**

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.



Ambulance

☎ 000

ENGLISH



Calling an ambulance

Hospitals



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

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.

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.

Scan the QR code to learn more about Ryan's Rule.



Maternity care



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

If you are pregnant, your GP will see you first.

They will order blood tests to check for any risks to your unborn baby. You will also have an ultrasound to confirm how many weeks pregnant you are. Your GP will then refer you to your local hospital to see a midwife for antenatal (pregnancy) care and the birth of your baby.

During your pregnancy you will have many tests. Some of these tests may cost money. Ask your GP or midwife about the cost.

If you have a complex pregnancy, you may also be referred to an Obstetric doctor for management. The hospital can refer you to multiple different services for additional care if it is required.

Closer to the birth of your baby the midwife will discuss your care including delivery and birthing options you will have. The midwives and doctors will care for you during your birth and up to 6 weeks after the birth.

If you are worried about your baby's movements, or you have pain, fluid or blood loss, please call Triple Zero (000) or go to your closest hospital.

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



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.



Ask for an interpreter at a pharmacy.

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 with other people even if you have the same sickness.





Mental wellbeing



It's free to ask for an interpreter when calling.

In an Emergency

If you or someone you know is in a life-threatening situation
24 hours a day, 7 days a week



Ambulance

☎ 000

Urgent support

If you are experiencing emotional distress and need crisis 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.

Advice phone lines

All of these services are free and confidential.

Head to Health

Talk to a mental health professional on the phone.

🕒 Monday - Friday 8:30am–5:00pm

☎ 1800 595 212

PANDA National Helpline

Support for parents and families during pregnancy and the first 12 months of a new baby.

🕒 Monday - Saturday
9:00am–7:30pm

☎ 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

DVConnect

Telephone support for people experiencing family or domestic violence.

☎ **DV Womensline** - 1800 811 811

☎ **DV Mensline** - 1800 600 636

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.

If you don’t have Medicare, check with your health insurance company to see what costs are covered

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.



Recommended health checks to prevent illness



Regular health checks



Hearing checks



Oral health (teeth) checks



Eye checks



Cancer screening

Family health support

The child, youth and family health service provides free services for children and their parents or carers to help monitor the health, wellbeing and development of children.

Find a child and youth service





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

Oral health (teeth) checks

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. Wait times can be long.

Children up to 17 years old with Medicare can have check-ups and basic treatment for free at a public oral health centre. It is recommended to have a dental check-up every year.

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 need to 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** for free 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 2 years if you have a Health Care card. Ask your GP or optometrist about the Spectacle Supply Scheme.



ENGLISH



More information
about oral services
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 screening/test		Bowel screening/test	Cervical screening/test
Age	50–74	40–49 or 75+	45–74	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. Do the test and send it back by mail.	Book an appointment with a GP
Cost	Free with a Medicare card	GP may charge for consultation	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
English resources	 			

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

Vaccinations



Ask for an interpreter at your vaccination appointment.

Vaccinations are important to protect you and your family from illnesses and viruses, for example influenza or COVID-19.

Vaccinations are sometimes required:

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

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 your and your family's vaccines, they may not need to be repeated. New arrivals with certain permanent resident or temporary visas can get records translated for free.

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



ENGLISH



Free Translating Service







Glossary

Active ingredient

The main component in the medicine that makes it work.

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.

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.

Audiologist

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

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.

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'.

Emergency department

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



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'.

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 clinics or medical centres in the community.

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.

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.

Optometrist

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



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.

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.

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.

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).

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.

Important contacts

GP

Nurse

Dentist

Oher

Notes



