



## When do I use a public hospital in Ireland?

Produced by Health Information and Advocacy Centre in partnership  
with Ethnic Minority Health Forum

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### About this publication



This is a series of fact sheets produced by Cairde's Health Information and Advocacy Centre on how to access health services in Ireland. Other topics in the series include:

- ◆ What do I do to see a doctor in Ireland?
- ◆ What do I do when I am pregnant in Ireland?

This fact sheet has been produced as an information guide only. Every effort has been made to ensure that all information is accurate at the time of publication: November 2007.

If you notice any errors please contact the Health Information and Advocacy Centre at 01-8552111 or email: [hiac@cairde.ie](mailto:hiac@cairde.ie)

### About Cairde

Cairde is a community development organisation working to tackle health inequalities among ethnic minority communities by improving ethnic minority access to health services and participation in health planning and delivery.

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## 1) Hospitals in Ireland

### A) Hospitals in Ireland

In Ireland, all people who are “ordinarily resident” are entitled to free or subsidised public health services, including hospitals. A person who is ordinarily resident means someone who has lived, or intends to live, in Ireland for one year or more and has documents/papers to be in the country. For example migrant workers, students, refugees, asylum seekers, people with leave to remain status etc.

Visitors from the European Union (EU) and Australia can also get free public health services because of a special agreement between Ireland and their country. Visitors from non EU countries have to pay the full cost of using all public health services in Ireland.

## 2) When do I use a hospital?

### A) In a health emergency

When you have a health emergency, the first thing you should do is to visit your family doctor (GP). Sometimes, your GP (General Practitioner) may not be able to treat you so they will ask you to go to the accident and emergency department of your nearest hospital. It is a lot easier for you to use accident and emergency department with a letter from your family doctor (GP).

If your doctor’s office is closed, you should phone the “out of hours” doctor where you live. You can find the numbers in the telephone directory or by ringing your family doctor/GP because a message with numbers for emergencies is usually left on the answering machine.

In some cases the family doctor (GP) may not be able to treat you so they will ask you to go to the accident and emergency department of your nearest

hospital. It is a lot easier for you to use accident and emergency department with a letter from your doctor.

If you do not have a family doctor (GP) and you feel you are getting very sick, phone for an ambulance or get a taxi to the accident and emergency department of your nearest hospital. Public ambulances are free for people who have medical cards. Public ambulances are called by dialling 999.

## B) To see a specialist doctor

Your family doctor (GP) will ask you to see an expert or specialist doctor if you need to. This is usually for a more in depth or special treatment. How long you have to wait to see the specialist doctor will depend on how on how serious your illness is, but you may have to wait for a long time. If you have a medical card or GP visit card, your visit to a specialist doctor will be free. If you are entitled to free or subsidized public health services, the visit to this doctor will also be free.

## C) To get tests or check-ups done for example x-ray, ultrasound scan, laboratory tests or other

Your family doctor (GP) or specialist doctor will let you know if you need to have a test done. They will give you a referral letter for the hospital where your test will be done. Some hospitals have times and days for some tests. The test result will be sent to your family doctor (GP) or the expert doctor you visited.

## D) For a surgery or an operation

You are normally referred to the hospital for surgery or an operation by your family doctor (GP) or a specialist. In cases such as a broken arm or other illnesses that need surgery or operation your doctor will ask you to go to your nearest hospital, or one with a shorter waiting time. If an accident happens at a

time that you cannot contact your family doctor (GP), you can call an ambulance or a taxi and go to the accident and emergency department of the nearest hospital.

### 3) How long do I have to wait to get treated in hospital?

#### A) In an emergency

The waiting time in the accident and emergency department could be from 2 to 6 hours or more. Patients are seen depending on how serious their illness is. A person with a more serious illness than you will be seen before you.

#### B) To see a specialist doctor

When you have to see a specialist doctor, you are put on a waiting list for that service in that hospital. The length of time waiting to see a specialist doctor will depend on how serious your illness, you may have to wait 2 to 5 months. Different hospitals have different waiting times. So please contact your hospital for more details.

#### C) For a test, scan and check-ups

You are normally referred by your family doctor (GP) or a specialist to have a test done in a hospital. The test waiting time differs from hospital to hospital. You could wait up to 3 weeks or more for a date and time for your test.

#### D) For a surgery or an operation

The length of time waiting for surgery will also depend on how serious your illness is. You may have to wait 2 to 5 months or more.

There is special government organisation which deals with public patients who have been waiting longest for surgery in a public hospital. It takes them off the waiting list. This is called scheme called the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF). The NTPF arranges for public patients to have faster treatment in private hospitals in Ireland, Northern Ireland and England.

There is an on-line register for all the people that are registered with public hospitals for surgery/operations. It is called the Patient Treatment Register (PTR). It allows the NTPF to write directly to patients waiting more than three (3) months on the waiting list and offer them treatment options. When your family doctor (GP) arranges for you to visit the hospital as a public patient for a stay or visit you will be placed on a waiting list for that hospital. You may decide not to have your information on the register. If you do this the NTPF will not be able to contact you for a faster treatment.

You can then either stay waiting on the public hospital waiting list for your treatment here in Ireland, or have the NTPF get you into a private hospital in Ireland or abroad. This is offered free even if you do not have a medical card.

However, you must have the right to use the public health service in Ireland.

If you have any question on waiting times for a stay or visit to a hospital as a public patient you should contact:

Lo-Call 1890 720 820

National Treatment Purchase Fund

Ashford House

Tara Street , Dublin 2

#### 4) What are the costs?

##### A) A person with a medical card or GP visit card

If you have a medical card/GP visit card, all services in the public hospital are free.

In addition, public hospital charges do not apply to the following groups of people:

- ◆ people getting treatment for some disease that can be passed to another person
- ◆ people who have to pay "long stay" charges
- ◆ children up to six weeks of age, children who have some diseases and disabilities and children asked to go for treatment from child health clinics and school board examinations
- ◆ people who are entitled to hospital services because of EU Regulations
- ◆ women using public maternity services

##### B) A person without a medical card or GP only visit card

The table below shows the charges that you have to pay for the services given to you when you visit a public hospital. In most cases you will be treated and a bill will be sent to you by post afterwards.

Hospital Services	Medical card/GP visit card	No Medical card/GP visit card but Entitled to public health services
Accident and emergency with your doctor referral	Free	Visit: Free If admitted to stay in a hospital €60/day. Maximum of €600 in a year.
Accident and emergency when you go yourself or call ambulance	Free	Visit: €60 or more If admitted to stay in a hospital €60/day. Maximum of €600 in a year.
To see a specialist	Free	Free
For tests, scan, check-ups etc	Free	Fees as applicable to specified test/check-up. Please check with the hospital

In some cases where you do not have the money, the HSE may offer the service free. You should write to your local HSE office about this.

## 5) Services and supports for medication and health costs

A) What other health payments can you get and how?

There are three types of health payments:

- ◆ Drug Payment Scheme
- ◆ Long-term Illness Scheme
- ◆ Health/Medical expense relief.

## Drug Payment Scheme

If you usually live in Ireland or came to Ireland to stay for more than one year and have papers to be here, you can ask for the Drugs Payment Scheme. People who do not have a medical card can get the Drug Payment Scheme to pay part of the cost of medicines they need. You should not have to pay more than €85 a month for medicine and other things to do with improving your health. To get this payment you cannot have a medical card.

Ask for this from your local pharmacy, or contact your local Health Service Executive office (HSE) for more information.

## Long-Term Illness Scheme

The Long-Term Illness Scheme is for people who have some illnesses but who do not have a medical card. It is to make sure you do not have to pay for medicine and other things to do with improving your health. You do not have to do a means/income test to get on to the Long-Term Illness Scheme.

The conditions included in the scheme are:

- ◆ Mental illness (up to age 16 only)
- ◆ Mental disability
- ◆ Multiple sclerosis
- ◆ Diabetes insipidus
- ◆ Diabetes mellitus
- ◆ Muscular dystrophy
- ◆ Spina bifida

- ◆ Haemophilia
- ◆ Hydrocephalus
- ◆ Cerebral palsy
- ◆ Parkinsonism
- ◆ Epilepsy
- ◆ Acute leukemia
- ◆ Cystic fibrosis

You will get a long-term illness book if you are on the Long-Term Illness Scheme. Your pharmacist will give you your medicines free.

### Health/Medical expenses relief

Health/Medical expenses relief is when money is given back to people who are working and paying tax if they spend more than a set amount to pay for their health and medicines. The person will have to keep all the receipts when they spend money on health or medicines.

At the end of the year, you will have to fill in a MED 1 form or MED 2 form and send it to your local tax office. MED 2 forms are only used when you had dental treatment or work done on your teeth. Not all dental treatments are covered. You can find out more about this from your local tax office.

## 6) Private health insurance

### A) What is private health insurance and who is entitled to buy it?

Some people buy private health insurance. Private health insurance is used to pay for you when you need to visit or stay in a hospital or visit your family doctor (GP). You pay some money to a health insurance company every month. The sum you pay depends on which type of health insurance cover you buy. You may pay a larger sum for your children's health needs. Then, when you get ill and need go to your family doctor (GP) or hospital, the health insurance company will pay some or all of the bill. You do not get money back if you are not sick.

Anyone living in Ireland can buy private health insurance as long as you have the papers to live in Ireland.

A number of companies offer private health insurance in Ireland. If you pay any of these companies monthly they should be able to pay most of your health and medicine costs.

These companies mostly pay for:

- ♦ Staying in a hospital
- ♦ A visit to a hospital
- ♦ When your are having a baby
- ♦ Getting better after being sick
- ♦ Psychiatric treatment and substance abuse

If you are getting health insurance you must tell the insurance companies all the information you know about your health. If you do not then they can decide not to pay for your health or medicine costs.

Each health insurance company can ask you for different fees. This annual fee will be set by what health or medicine costs you want paid now or in the future. The fee does not increase in the future if you get the health insurance company to pay for health or medicine costs now. Health insurance for people under 18 years old, 18 to 23 years old, in full-time education or retired people may be able to pay lower than normal health insurance fees.

If you have problems getting private health insurance or need more information about it you can contact:

Health Insurance Authority

Canal House,

Canal Road,

Dublin 6.

Tel: (01) 406 0080 Fax: (01) 406 0081

## 7) A list of hospitals in Dublin

### County Dublin

#### **Adelaide, Meath, and National Children's Hospital**

Tallaght, Dublin, Co Dublin, 24  
Ireland  
Tel: 353 (0)-1-414-2000

#### **Baggot Street Community Hospital**

18 Upper Baggot Street, Dublin 2, Co Dublin,  
Ireland  
Tel: 353 (0) 1 668 1577  
Fax: 353 01-6607982

#### **Beaumont Hospital**

P.O. Box 1297 - Beaumont Road, Dublin, Co Dublin, 9  
Ireland  
Tel: 353 (0)1 8093000  
Fax: 353-1-8376982

#### **Bloomfield Hospital**

Bloomfield Avenue, Morehampton Road, Dublin 4, Co Dublin,  
Ireland  
Tel: 353 (0) 1 668-3815  
Fax: 353 1 668-7693

#### **Cappagh National Orthopaedic Hospital**

Finglas, Dublin, Co Dublin, 11  
Ireland  
Tel: 00353 (0)1-8140400  
Fax: 00353 01-8140327

#### **Central Mental Hospital**

Dundrum, Dublin, Co Dublin,  
Ireland  
Tel: 353 (0)1 298 9266

#### **Cherry Orchard Hospital**

Ballyfermot, Dublin, Co Dublin, 10  
Ireland  
Tel: 353 (01) 6206400

#### **City of Dublin Skin and Cancer Hospital**

Hume Street, Dublin, Co Dublin, 2  
Ireland

Tel: 353 (0) 1 676 6935  
Fax: 353 (0) 1 676 2967

**Clonskeagh Hospital**

Clonskeagh, Dublin, Co Dublin, 6  
Ireland

Tel: 353 (0) 1 2697877  
Fax: 353 (0) 1 2698555

**Coombe Women's Hospital**

Cork St, Dolphins Barn, Dublin, Co Dublin, 8  
Ireland

Tel: 353 (0)1 408 5200  
Fax: 353 1 453 6033

**Dublin Dental Hospital**

Lincoln Place, Dublin, Co Dublin, 2  
Ireland

Tel: 353 (0)1 6127200  
Fax: 353 1 6711255

**Highfield Hospital**

Swords Road, Dublin, Co Dublin, 9  
Ireland

Tel: 353 (0) 1 8374444  
Fax: 353 (0) 1 8379013

**James Connolly Memorial Hospital**

Blanchardstown, Dublin, Co Dublin, 15  
Ireland

Tel: 353 (0) 1 821 3844  
Fax: 353 1 820 3565

**Leopardstown Park Hospital**

Foxrock, Dublin, Co Dublin, 18  
Ireland

Tel: 353 (0) 1 295 5055  
Fax: 353 (0) 1 295 5757

**Mater Hospital**

Eccles Street, Dublin 7  
Ireland

Tel: 353 (0)1 8032000

**National Maternity Hospital**

Holles Street

Dublin 2  
Tel: (01) 637 3100  
Fax: (01) 676 6623

**Our Lady's Children's Hospital**

Crumlin, Dublin 12  
Ireland  
Tel: 353 (0) 4096100

**Rotunda Hospital**

Parnell Square  
Dublin 1  
Tel: (01) 873 0700  
Fax: (01) 873 0932

**St. James's Hospital**

James's Street, Dublin 8  
Ireland  
Tel: 353 (0)1- 410 3000

**The Children's University Hospital**

Temple Street, Dublin 1  
Ireland  
Tel: 353 (0) 1 8784200

**The National Children's Hospital,**

Tallaght, Dublin 24  
Ireland  
Ph: 353 (0) 1 414 23 73  
Fax: 01 414 2376

## Useful Addresses

[www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie)

This is the website of the Citizens Information Board (CIB). The site gives information on the social and civil rights of everyone in Ireland.

[www.dohc.ie](http://www.dohc.ie)

This is the website of the Department of Health and Children with responsibility for policy in relation to the Irish health services.

[www.healthfacts.ie](http://www.healthfacts.ie)

This is the website of Cairde's Health Information and Advocacy Centre. On this site you can find out more about your health, how to make your way through the health services and how to get involved in health.

[www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

The Health Service Executive (HSE) website gives health and personal social service information for everyone living in Ireland.

[www.oasis.gov.ie](http://www.oasis.gov.ie)

This is an Irish government website that gives information on public services in Ireland.

## Publications

### Series one

What do I need to do to see a doctor in Ireland?

### Series two

How do I use a public hospital in Ireland?

### Series three

What do I do when I am pregnant in Ireland?



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