

Using healthcare services in the community

He mahi tikanga oranga mo te kātoa

Pharmacy

Knowing what is available and what to expect may help you to get the best from your care.

There may be differences in processes from one community healthcare service to the next, as each service does things in its own way to support its community.

The range and nature of services may also differ depending on where you live.

If you have specific questions, we suggest you contact the community healthcare service directly.

What is community healthcare?

These are services that are provided in the community and not in a hospital. Usually, these services are overseen by a Primary Health Organisation (PHO), and are provided through a general practice setting.

This includes services for diagnosis and treatment, referrals to specialists or hospital care, health education, counselling, testing, screening, and prevention.

Some services are also available outside a PHO, and usually these are provided by Non Government Organisations (NGOs) and individuals working in communities.

These services include home and community support, personal cares, district nursing, mental health support, and other specialist care.

Some community healthcare services may have additional costs and some may be income tested and subsidised.

If you are concerned about the cost, you should talk directly with your healthcare provider about your situation.

Support needs

If you need support when you are using a community healthcare service, you are entitled to have your support needs met.

For example:

- access to a New Zealand Sign Language interpreter
- having information written down to help you understand it better
- support to access services and make decisions.

You can also ask for healthcare professionals who are the same gender as you, or to have a chaperone present for consultations and tests.

You may find it useful to have a My Health Passport booklet on hand to help with communication and to hold information about your support needs.

What is a pharmacy and who are pharmacists?

A pharmacy is a place where you can get medicines with a prescription, or purchase other medicines and products.

You can go to a pharmacy for help with treating minor injuries or illnesses, for suggestions on how to manage your medicines, and to ask for advice regarding your well-being, for free.

A pharmacist is a person who is professionally qualified to prepare and dispense medicines.

Some services a pharmacist may offer may also be subsidised by the government. These include:

- quitting smoking and weight management advice
- blood-thinning medicine (such as warfarin) monitoring services
- blood-pressure monitoring services
- vaccinations, including influenza (also called “the flu”), whooping cough, meningococcal disease, and shingles
- contraception and emergency contraception in some instances.

Types of pharmacist

Community pharmacists are located in communities and in most rural towns. You can use a community pharmacist if you have a prescription you need to have filled (dispensed) or if you need to buy some medicine that is available without a prescription (over-the-counter medicine).

General practice pharmacists work in general practices or in other clinics. They make sure that any medication you are taking is working well, and is safe and effective for you.

Prescribing pharmacists have had extra training and experience so that they can also prescribe medications. These pharmacists usually work in general practices, hospitals, or other places such as marae clinics and rest homes.

Medicine services

You may get your medicines packed in easy-to-use systems such as blister packs or sachets. Some pharmacies may also offer a delivery service.

Usually, the pharmacist or staff member will tell you:

- when and how often you should take your medicine
- about any unwanted effects you may experience
- what to do if you have a reaction to the medication.

Sometimes the look of your regular medications may change if there has been a change in supplier.

If your regular medication looks different and your pharmacist has not given you a reason for this, it is important to check with the pharmacist that you have the correct medication.

Medicine costs

There may be some costs involved with getting medication, and some prescription medicines are subsidised by the government.

If you are concerned about costs or any subsidies you may be eligible for, talk with your pharmacist about this.

For further information about your rights when accessing health or disability services, or to raise your concerns about the service you received, please contact:

The Nationwide Health & Disability Advocacy Service

- Free phone: 0800 555 050
- Email: advocacy@advocacy.org.nz
- Website: www.advocacy.org.nz

The Health and Disability Commissioner

- Postal address: PO BOX 1791, Auckland, 1140
- Auckland: (09) 373 1060; Wellington: (04) 494 7900
- National freephone: 0800 11 22 33
- Email: hdc@hdc.org.nz
- Website: www.hdc.org.nz