

Using Healthcare Services in the Community

He mahi tikanga Oranga mo te Kātoa

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

The information in this booklet aims to answer some of your questions.

Mēna ka kimihia te oranga a te tangata, anei he pukapuka whakamāramatanga, kia mohio ai koe he aha nga putake hei awahi i to whakaoranga.



Health and Disability Commissioner
Te Toihau Hauora, Hauātanga



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Introduction

This *Using Healthcare Services in the Community* booklet has been produced by the Health and Disability Commissioner with input from community **healthcare providers**, community organisations, and individuals.

The booklet is for people who are unfamiliar with community healthcare services. It includes:

- Tips on how to get the best from these services.
- A general guide on what is available to you and what you can expect.

It does not cover all community healthcare services, and information in the booklet is not legal advice.

At the end of the booklet you will find a list of definitions of key words used in the booklet (a glossary). These words are found in **bold** throughout the booklet.

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

Whenever you use a health or disability service in New Zealand, you are protected by the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights (the Code of Rights).

A copy of the Code of Rights can be found at this link: <https://www.hdc.org.nz/your-rights/the-code-and-your-rights/> and on the back page of this booklet.

Quick Response Code (QR Code) on the front cover of this booklet

QR codes, such as the one on the cover of this document, make it easier to link to the alternative language and format versions of this booklet. QR codes can be read using the camera in a smartphone or tablet. For most devices open your camera application and point it at the QR code. To work your device needs to be connected to the internet.

You can also access the NZSL version on HDC's website: <https://www.hdc.org.nz/disability/disability-related-resources/>

What is community healthcare?

Community healthcare services are provided in the community and not in a hospital.

Usually, these services are overseen by a **Primary Health Organisation (PHO)**, which offers services to people who have enrolled with the PHO. Mostly, the PHO provides the services through a general practice (GP) 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.

Community healthcare services may be funded by your local District Health Board (DHB), the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC), or the Ministry of Health. However, depending on your situation there may also be some cost to you.

- You can play an active role in your own health care.
- Having a good partnership with a community **healthcare provider** with whom you feel comfortable may help you to get the most from the service.

What are Māori health providers?

Ki te kore ngā pūtake e mākūkūngia, e kore te rākau e tipu
E ngā mana, e ngā reo,
Rau rangatira mā
Tēna koutou, tēna koutou, tēna koutou

There are a number of Māori health providers across New Zealand. Usually, these services are funded by the local DHB. Māori health providers deliver services in an appropriate and sensitive way that is culturally specific to Māori. While these **healthcare providers** predominantly deliver services to Māori clients, they are available to everyone.



The Ministry of Health has a directory of Māori health providers. You can find this at: <https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/services-and-support/health-care-services/maori-health-provider-directory>

What to do in an emergency

If you or someone you know needs urgent medical attention, call 111 for an ambulance or go to your nearest hospital emergency department.

Hospital emergency departments are for accidents/injuries and medical emergencies, while after-hours and urgent care services are available for other medical and accident/injury care.

Healthline

Healthline is a free phone service where you can get health advice and information from registered nurses, 24 hours a day. Staff are trained in assessing and providing advice over the phone.

To contact Healthline free phone: 0800 611 116

What is consent and decision-making?

When you use community healthcare services, you need to **consent** (agree to the actions) to the use of the information you give and the recommended treatment.

You may be asked many questions. This is so that service providers can understand what is happening to you and they can make a plan with you for any further tests and treatments. You can also ask any questions you may have about the recommended care and treatment.

To give **consent**, you must be able to make the decision. To do this you should be given all the information you need (such as what the treatment will be, any risks with the treatment, any other treatment types available) in a way you can understand (such as having access to an **interpreter** if needed) and you must not feel pressured by someone else to make a particular choice.

Depending on the circumstances, **consent** can be given:

- verbally (for example, a person saying they're happy to have a blood test)
- in writing (for example, signing a **consent** form)
- non-verbally (for example, a person stepping onto the scales to be weighed).

Sometimes you may want to have support to make a decision (**supported decision-making**) and to talk through your options with someone who knows you well and whom you trust, before you make a decision.

If you are not able to make a decision and **consent** to treatment, then your **welfare guardian**, your **Enduring Power of Attorney (EPOA)**, or a family member may be able to make the decision for you. In some situations, such as in an emergency or if there is no one who can **consent** on your behalf, then your doctor may provide treatments that are in the best interests for you.

Remember:

- You can have someone help you to make decisions and be with you during appointments.
- Your information will be shared with others only when it is necessary and relevant for the care and treatment you are receiving.
- Sometimes community healthcare services will be training students. You should be told about the students' involvement and you have a right to decide how involved students are in your care and treatment.
- You do not have to agree to have treatment, and even if you do agree to treatment, you can change your mind at any time.

Costs to use community healthcare services

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.

A Community Services Card can **subsidise** some of these costs. To find out more information, contact Work and Income's Community Services Card team:



Phone: 0800 999 999

Email: csc_enquiries@msd.govt.nz

Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC)

ACC is there to help you if you have been hurt through an accident. ACC may pay for some of the costs of your treatment. To find out more information, contact ACC at:



Te Kaporeihana Āwhina Hunga Whara

Phone: 0800 101 996

Email: claims@acc.co.nz

Support you can access

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

- Access to an **interpreter**, including a New Zealand Sign Language **interpreter** if you are deaf or hearing impaired.
- 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.

This booklet can be downloaded or ordered from the Health and Disability Commissioner's website at <https://www.hdc.org.nz/disability/my-health-passport/>.

COVID-19 changes

The COVID-19 virus has seen a change in some community healthcare services, including more social distancing, fewer walk-in appointments, and more COVID-19 testing stations. Depending on the alert level, some non-essential services may also be stopped, including disability day services.

It is important that you are aware of these changes and that you communicate with the service in advance if you have any symptoms of COVID-19. If you are waiting for a COVID-19 test result, you should isolate at home.

You should let the service provider know if you are unable to access the service because of these changes (e.g., you are unable to use an intercom to enter the building), and they should work with you to ensure your needs are met.

For current information about COVID-19 changes, check the following website: <https://covid19.govt.nz/>

General practice (doctor) settings

Most general practices have regular opening hours to see patients. If you need to see someone outside these hours, or it is urgent but it is not an emergency, there are some local after-hours and urgent care services available.

You should contact your general practice for information on how to reach an after-hours service, or you can call Healthline on 0800 611 116 for advice on what to do and where to go for help.

- In an emergency situation, you should dial 111 for ambulance services or go to your nearest emergency department.

General practices

A number of different **healthcare professionals** can work in general practices, each with different roles. These can include doctors, nurses, and pharmacists. To see a **healthcare professional** at a practice, you may have to first register with them.

Some general practices also work in retirement villages and residential care facilities. If you live in these places and you want to see a doctor or other **healthcare professional**, then you should talk with your service provider, as they may be able to arrange this for you.

Remember that:

- General practices can get busy.
- You may not be able to see the same person every time, so it is important that you follow up on any tests or **referrals** you have been given.
- If you want to make an appointment, you may have to wait some time for an available space.
- Depending on the reason for your **consultation**, you may be able to see a nurse or a pharmacist instead of a doctor.

Who are general practitioners and nurse practitioners?

General practitioners (GPs) are doctors who care for, diagnose, and treat people in the community. Nurse practitioners (NPs) in general practices have had extra training to provide some of the same services as GPs.

GPs and NPs can both provide certain services, including:

- **consultation**, examination, and providing a course of treatment, including minor **surgery**
- advice on health care and prevention of illness/es
- prescribing and administering medications, including vaccinations
- **referring** you to other services when necessary
- **screening** at-risk groups for diseases like cervical cancer and diabetes.

Nurses

Nurses (practice nurses and nurse prescribers) can also work in general practices. What each nurse can do depends on their training.

Practice nurses can see patients for a number of reasons. They can:

- assess and diagnose
- order tests
- provide education on particular conditions.

Nurse prescribers also have particular training, skills, and experience. This means they can diagnose and treat certain common and long-term conditions such as diabetes and asthma.

Nurse prescribers can:

- screen
- vaccinate
- prescribe some common medicines and provide ongoing treatment for long-term health conditions.

Consultations and appointments

What to know before a consultation

It may be helpful to write down your main concern and any other issues, and take these with you to your **consultation** (appointment) with your **healthcare professional**.

It is important that before a **consultation**, you know:

- what you want to talk about
- what you want to achieve from the **consultation**
- what you need from the **healthcare professional** you are seeing.

If you have a list of issues to talk about, you may want to give this to the **healthcare professional** at the start of your **consultation**, so that the most important issues are addressed first.

Usually, general practice **consultations** are between 10–15 minutes long. This means that often only one concern can be covered.

If you have other concerns, you may need to book in extra time. It is a good idea to talk with the receptionist about booking a longer **consultation** to cover your concerns.

It may be useful to prepare some background information. This could include:

- Family history (e.g., heart problems, diabetes)
- Your own recent history (e.g., headaches, dizziness, nausea, etc)
- Any symptoms you have, even if you think they are not related or important.

You should think about what you want to achieve from the **consultation**. Do you want to:

- Have tests done?
- Get a **prescription** or **referral**?
- Get more information?

What to know during a consultation

You should feel comfortable with the community **healthcare service**, and you should feel that your concerns are being listened to.

Remember:

- You are entitled to have a person with you for support during your **consultation**.
- You should let the **healthcare professional** know if you have any difficulty hearing or understanding information. It is important for them to know this so that they can give you the information in a way that you can understand.
- You should speak up if you have questions or concerns. If you don't understand something, ask the community **healthcare service** to explain the information in a different way.
- It is important for you to understand all the information, so that you can make an informed decision about your treatment and next steps.

You should be told what you can expect to happen afterwards. For example:

- Do you need further tests? Or a follow-up **consultation**?
- Are you being **referred** to another service?
- Will you be given a **prescription** for medicine? If so, what effects and potential side effects should you be aware of?
- How will you be told about any test results?
- What should you do if you become more unwell or if you begin to experience new symptoms?

What to think about after a consultation

Make sure you know when any further tests (for example, blood, urine, or other diagnostic tests), **referrals** (for example, to **specialists** or to hospital services), or treatments (for example, medication or **surgery**) are going to happen.

Sometimes you have to visit another community healthcare service, such as a blood collection centre or a radiologist's office, to have further tests done.

Make sure you have all the information needed to have the correct tests done.

You should also know:

- what other actions you are expected to take
- what you can expect to happen next
- what to do if your situation changes.

Remember:

- If you have any questions, talk with someone at the service — they are there to help you.
- If you are expecting a test result or **specialist** appointment that seems overdue, it is important to follow up with the service.

How do community healthcare services use technology?

An increasing number of community healthcare services now use technology such as the telehealth system.

Telehealth allows a service provider to deliver healthcare to a person who is in a different physical location. Through telehealth, community **healthcare professionals** can contact you, have a **consultation**, and discuss your care and treatment options. This can be done through:

- email
- telephone
- video services.

This may not be suitable for all situations and **consultation** needs. It is important to talk to your community **healthcare provider** if you have concerns about using a telehealth system.

Many general practices also offer a “patient portal”. This means that you can use a computer to communicate securely with your general practice.

On the patient portal you can:

- request a repeat **prescription**
- email your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist
- access your tests results and other clinical information the practice holds about you.

Pharmacy

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. You may find pharmacists working in your local community, in a hospital, or in a general practice (see the General practice (doctor) settings section on page 6 of this booklet).

Subsidised pharmacy services

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 with other community **healthcare professionals** (e.g., doctors and nurses) to make sure that any medication you are taking is working well, and is safe and effective for you, particularly when you are taking several medications.

- *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

There are a number of different ways to get medicines and get your **prescriptions** filled. For example, 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. Your pharmacist should tell you if this is the case. 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:

- Some **prescription** medicines are **subsidised** by the government.
- When you have paid for 20 new prescriptions in one year (1 February to 31 January), any further prescriptions for that year may be free.

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

Other services in the community

A number of community healthcare services can be provided to you outside a hospital, general practice, or pharmacy. These include services such as:

- home and community support services
- test collection centres (for example, for blood and urine tests)
- community mental health and addiction services
- dentists
- physiotherapists and occupational therapists
- counsellors and psychologists
- social workers
- dietitians and nutritionists.

You can access many of these services through a **referral** from your doctor or hospital. However, there may be a cost to you to use these services.

What are home and community support services?

Home and community support services are there to help you to live independently in your home and to access your community. You may have a disability, or you may have had a change in circumstances that means you need more support to live at home.

The first step is to have your support needs assessed by your local Needs Assessment Service Coordination (NASC) team. You can contact them directly, or you can be referred by your doctor or the hospital.

Depending on your situation, support may be funded by the Ministry of Health, the local DHB, or by ACC. The type of service available to you may also depend on where you live in New Zealand.

You can find more information and the contact details for NASC at the following website:



<https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/services-and-support/disability-services/getting-support-disability/needs-assessment-and-service-coordination-services>

Once you have been assessed as needing support, a service provider will talk with you about the services you need and create a support plan for you.

Remember:

- It may take some time for supports to be arranged.
- You should be reassessed regularly (usually annually).
- You should talk to the service provider if your needs change or you have any concerns about your support.
- Support may be provided by support workers, healthcare assistants, or nurses.

Support can include help with:

- preparing meals
- washing and drying clothes
- house cleaning
- help with eating and drinking
- getting dressed and undressed, and showering and toileting
- getting around your home and community.

You and your family carers may also be able to use **respite services** for a period of time.

Nursing services may include:

- continence management
- catheter care
- wound care
- stoma care
- medication oversight and management.

Who are district nurses and palliative care nurses?

These nurses provide care to people in their homes or at community clinics.

They can provide **specialist** nursing care so that you don't need to be hospitalised. They may also help when you have been discharged from hospital but you still need treatment or care.

Palliative care nurses also specialise in providing care and treatment for people who have an illness that cannot be cured and may at some time result in the person dying (whether that is years, months, weeks, or days away). This care involves supporting and helping the person to live as comfortably as possible.

These nurses can help you with a wide range of mental and physical health needs. They are trained in the following areas:

- wound care and postoperative care
- medication administration
- management of illnesses and diseases
- pain management.

What are community mental health and addiction services?

Mental health and addiction services are there to help you. There are different services depending on where you live and your age. Mental health services in the community are funded through DHBs and charities. A number of community organisations provide services, including services for youth, alcohol and other drug programmes, and counselling.

Most people can be referred to services through their doctor or hospital. If you or someone you know would like to access these services, you should contact your doctor.

There may be a long wait time to access these services. If it is an emergency, contact your local DHB's psychiatric emergency service or mental health crisis assessment team for help.

You can find contact numbers for your local health crisis assessment team on the following website: <https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/services-and-support/health-care-services/mental-health-services/crisis-assessment-teams>

or you can talk to someone about your concerns on the following contact numbers:

- Need to talk? (1737 — free call or text)
- The Depression Helpline (0800 111 757)
- Healthline (0800 611 116)
- Lifeline (0800 543 354)
- Samaritans (0800 726 666)
- Youthline (0800 376 633)
- Alcohol Drug Helpline (0800 787 797)
- What's Up? — Helpline for children and young people (0800 942 8787)

What to do

If you are feeling anxious, nervous, or worried

Sometimes attending appointments can be stressful — especially when you feel unwell.

Anxiety is a regular response to stress, and it is natural to feel this way. Anxiety can often be managed with help. It is important to recognise and seek treatment as soon as possible.

If you become anxious, it is a good idea to tell someone and ask for help.

Some general practices also offer short-term counselling sessions (up to six weeks), or they can refer you to community mental health organisations who may be able to help you. It is a good idea to talk with them about your situation and to ask for help.

- If you have a support person with you at an appointment, tell them how you are feeling. If you are alone, tell a staff member and ask them to help you.
- They may be able to take you to another area and provide you with ways to reduce your anxiety.

If you experience long waiting times

Sometimes community healthcare services can be busy. This means that you may have to wait some time before you are seen.

If you feel you have been waiting a long time, then talk to the service provider. They may be able to tell you how much longer you can expect to wait or arrange another appointment for you.

Some community healthcare services may also have waiting lists for services. The service should keep in touch with you about your place on the wait list. If you are worried about the time this is taking, you should talk with the service about this.

If you are concerned or unhappy with a service

Sometimes, you may not get the service you were expecting. If you feel this way, then you should tell someone about your experience so that services can improve.

- Each provider has a complaints process, so you can tell them about your concern.
- If you feel uncomfortable talking with them, or you want support to access the complaints procedure for the service, you should ask for help.

Remember:

- You can have someone help you talk the matter through with the healthcare service.
- If you don't want to talk with the health or disability service directly, then the Nationwide Health and Disability Advocacy Service can help you to try to resolve your concerns.



The Nationwide Health & Disability Advocacy Service

Free Phone: 0800 555 050

Email: advocacy@hdc.org.nz

Website: www.advocacy.org.nz

If you would like to make a complaint about a health or disability service, you can also contact the Health and Disability Commissioner.



The Health and Disability Commissioner

Auckland: (09) 373 1060

Wellington: (04) 494 7900

National Freephone: 0800 11 22 33

Email: hdc@hdc.org.nz

Website: www.hdc.org.nz

Te reo translations

You may hear some of the words listed below when you are in a **consultation** with a **healthcare professional**. If you don't understand the meaning of any words that are being used, ask your **healthcare professional**.

Co-morbidity	<i>Mate tiwhatiwha</i>
Cancer	<i>Mate pukupuku</i>
Diagnosis	<i>Whakataunga</i>
Dizziness	<i>Ninihi</i>
Fever	<i>Kirika</i>
Gout	<i>Porohau</i>
Hernia growth	<i>Whatirama, whaturama</i>
Inflammation of mucous membranes	<i>Marupo</i>
Patient	<i>Turoro</i>
Prognosis	<i>Waitohunga</i>
Perspiration	<i>Kakawa</i>
Referral	<i>Tukunga</i>
Swelling	<i>Pupuhi</i>
Swollen	<i>Matakoma</i>
Tumour	<i>Puku</i>
A wrinkle	<i>Pori</i>

Glossary

All of the words listed below are found in this document. They are in **bold** print throughout the document.

Word	Definition
Consent (informed and voluntary)	<p>“Informed” means that you have been given all the information you need, in a way that you can understand, to be able to make a decision about whether you want to receive that treatment and care.</p> <p>“Voluntary” means that you have been given the choice to make the decision, and you have not been pressured by someone else to make a decision.</p>
Consultation	This means you will meet with a healthcare professional to talk about any concerns you have and get their advice. This can be in person, over the phone, or through a video call. The healthcare professional may ask you questions and ask you to have tests, or refer you to someone else for treatment.
Diagnosis	This means that a healthcare professional has looked at your health concerns and any symptoms you have and decided what the problem may be. Sometimes tests will help healthcare professionals to decide on a diagnosis. Having a diagnosis for a problem will help with treating the problem.
Dispense (medication)	This is what a pharmacist is trained to do. It means that the pharmacist prepares and hands out medication to people.
Enduring Power of Attorney (EPOA) for personal care and welfare	This is a legal document that tells the hospital that the named person on the document can make certain decisions on your behalf. This is when you are unable to make those decisions yourself because of illness or injury. Decisions could include treatments you do or do not want to be given, or places you would prefer to receive services (for example, at home or in hospital).
Healthcare provider/healthcare professional.	This is a person who gives advice and treatment for your care — for example, doctors, nurses, dentists, and pharmacists. Healthcare service providers have experience and training in health care.
Interpreter	This is a person who can translate between people speaking different languages — for example, a person who can translate sign language.

My Health Passport	This is a booklet that you carry with you when you visit health and disability services. It has information about how you want people to communicate with you and support you when you use health or disability services.
Prescription	This is a way that healthcare professionals make sure that people are given a medication or treatment. Pharmacists can fill prescriptions and give that person the medication.
Referral	This happens when your doctor decides that you need to be seen by another healthcare professional such as a specialist. Your doctor will make a request to the healthcare professional, who will contact you to arrange a time to meet.
Respite services	This service allows a disabled person and their carers to have a break and rest from providing care. There are many different options for this service. For more information about respite services, have a look at the Ministry of Health's website: https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/services-and-support/disability-services/types-disability-support/respite/respite-supports-and-services
Screening	This is when healthcare professionals give you tests or ask you specific questions to look for health issues that you may not know you have. Screening is used to see if you may be at risk of having a particular medical condition in the future — for example, diabetes.
Specialist	A specialist is a healthcare professional such as a doctor who practises in one area and has had a lot of training in that particular area. You may be referred to a specialist by your GP.
Subsidised	This means that someone else has paid for some of the costs so that it is cheaper for you to buy it. For example, the New Zealand government pays some of the costs of some medicines.
Supported decision-making	This is a process where you are supported by someone who knows you well (for example, a family member or friend) and whom you trust. Your support person will help you to understand your options and to make a decision.
Surgery/operation	This is a type of treatment where the person's body is cut into and parts of the body are removed or repaired.
Welfare guardian	A welfare guardian is someone appointed by a Family Court judge to look after your personal care and welfare if you are unable to understand or communicate decisions about those issues — for example, who you should live with.

Remember: You have rights when you use a health or disability service in New Zealand:

- 1) The right to be **treated with respect**
- 2) The right to be **treated fairly**
- 3) The right to **dignity and independence**
- 4) The right to have **good care and support that fits your needs**
- 5) The right to be **told things in a way you understand**
- 6) The right to be **told everything you need to know** about your care and support
- 7) The right to **make choices** about your care and support
- 8) The right to **have support**
- 9) The **right to decide** if you want to be part of training, teaching, or research
- 10) The **right to make a complaint.**



Health and Disability Commissioner
Te Toihau Hauora, Hauātanga