

## Welcome Pack for Immigrants in Clare

# Health



Compiled by Clare Immigrant Support Centre



# Who provides healthcare in Ireland?

**In Ireland, there is a wide range of services available to support your physical, mental and psychological help and wellbeing. These services include advanced medical treatment for many serious conditions.**

## Health Service Executive (HSE)

The Health Service Executive (HSE) provides public health and social services in Ireland including:

- hospitals;
- health centres;
- community services for older people;
- family support;
- health and welfare entitlements;
- mental health services; and
- disability services.

The health service is divided into four administrative HSE regions. The HSE West

is the service in this region.

Healthcare in Ireland is available through both a public and private system. If your income is below a certain level you may qualify for a 'medical card'.

The medical card entitles you to a full range of services. If you are entitled to a medical card you can attend your family doctor, usually called a GP (General Practitioner), for free. Usually, your dependants (husband or wife, and children) will also be entitled to free medical services that include:

- visits to your family doctor;
- hospital services in public hospitals;
- most medicines prescribed by your doctor;
- maternity and infant care;
- dental, optical and aural (hearing and

**If you have any worries about you or your family's physical or mental health, make an appointment to see your GP**

## Am I entitled to a medical card if I am over 70?

You are entitled to a medical card if you are over 70 years old unless your income before tax deductions is more than:

- €700 per week for a single person; and
- €1,400 per week for a married couple.

If your income is more than this and you have very high medical expenses, you can apply for a medical card under the 'discretionary scheme'.

speech) services; and

- medical appliances.

However, some of these services may have waiting lists.

## How do I get a medical card?

To qualify for a medical card you must pass a 'means test' – your income must be below a certain level.

You can find out if you are eligible for a medical card by contacting your nearest HSE office or Citizens' Information Centre (CIC).

You may automatically qualify for a medical card if you already receive state benefits provided such as:

- supplementary welfare allowance;
- old-age and widow or widowers' non-contributory pensions;

**To get information about medical cards contact the HSE office in the Sandfield Centre, Highfield Park, Ennis, (065) 686 8076.**

**You will need a PPS number (see page 7 of the 'Employment' booklet)**

- disability or deserted wife's allowances; or
- one-parent family payment.

## Free services

Services available free of charge under the Medical Card Scheme include:

- family doctor (GP) services;
- referral to specialist medical consultants;
- hospital inpatient (overnight stays) and outpatient services (follow-up services);
- prescriptions and medicines (with some exceptions);
- women's health services;
- psychological services for those traumatised by torture, rape or other critical life experiences;
- optical tests and glasses;
- hearing tests and hearing aids;
- dental treatment for adults;
- where problems have been noted at school medical examinations, dental treatment for children.;
- maternity services;
- immunisation services; and
- health screening.

# Contacting a GP is the first step

**Register with a General Practitioner (GP) practice as soon as you can. Don't wait until you get ill. If you are eligible for a medical card, you will need it, for example, to receive treatment or purchase prescription drugs**

### What is a 'GP visit card'?

If you are not entitled to a medical card you may still be entitled to a 'GP visit card', which would entitle you to free GP visits only. The income level for 'GP visit cards' is higher than that for medical cards. You can find out if you are eligible for a 'GP visit card' by contacting your nearest HSE Health Centre or Citizens' Information Centre (CIC). You will have to fill out an application form.

### What about children?

Children in Ireland are dependants of their parents and are entitled to the same health services as their parents. This means that if you have a medical card, your children are included as a dependant on that card and are entitled to the same range of services as you are.

At the same time, there is a range of services specifically for children and certain services are provided free of charge for children even if their parents do not have a medical card. These services are generally provided as part of:

- maternity and infant welfare services;
- health services for preschool children; and
- school health services.

Children are also entitled to vaccination and immunisation services free of charge.

### What do private patients pay?

If you are not entitled to a medical card you are considered to be a private patient. This means that when you visit your family doctor you must pay for their services.

You will also have to pay for prescribed medicines, although nobody in Ireland,

**The Health Insurance Authority is an independent regulator for the private health insurance market in Ireland and provides information and assistance to consumers of the private health insurance market. [www.hia.ie](http://www.hia.ie)  
Phone: 01 - 406 0080**

regardless of income, has to pay more than a certain amount each month for medicines.

Charges for visiting a GP are not set and will vary between doctors so you should check before you go. It is usually more than €30.

## How do I find a doctor?

**G**eneral Practitioner (GP) is the official term for a family doctor in Ireland. They provide services to people in their surgery or in their patients' homes. Most people simply call GPs their 'doctor' or 'family doctor'.

The GP is responsible for all your treatment and will arrange for you to see any other health specialists when needed.

Anyone coming to live in Ireland should first choose and register with a GP. Your GP should be your first point of contact if you are ill and may prescribe treatment for any illness or refer you to a consultant or hospital for further investigation.

If you register your health details with a GP and later experience problems with your health, your medical history will be on record.

You can also get a list of GPs from the:

- Citizens Information Centres;
- Local Health Office;
- main public libraries;
- Yellow Pages; and
- your friends and neighbours should be able to recommend a good GP practice near where you live.

## Keep your GP's phone number where you can find it quickly

**G**et the name of your GP before someone gets ill so that there is no delay if you need a doctor urgently.

You can find a list of local GPs in the Golden Pages phone directory. You can get a copy of the Golden Pages at your local post office.

## How do I see my GP?

**I**n most cases you need to make an appointment to see your GP (family doctor). Either phone the surgery or go there yourself and ask for a date when they can see you.

Sometimes you need to wait a few days before you can see the doctor. If you need immediate treatment ask for an urgent appointment.

If you cannot keep your appointment let your GP know as soon as possible.

## Will a GP come to my home?

**I**f you need to see a doctor because of an emergency or you are too ill to attend their surgery there are a number of options.

- During surgery hours, phone your GP who will decide if a home visit is necessary based on medical need.
- Outside surgery hours, if you phone

your GP the answering machine will usually tell you the number to phone in an emergency – this number may be a 'locum' service (a service in which another doctor is available to patients outside normal hours).

- If your GP is a member of a GP out-of-hours co-operative, you can visit it and see whatever doctor is on duty.

The type of care that an out-of-hours co-operative may provide is:

- phone advice by a nurse or doctor;
- a treatment centre that you can attend; or
- a visit to your home by the doctor on duty.

If you have a medical card or GP visit

## In an emergency dial 999 or 112

card, services provided by the GP out-of-hours co-operative are free. Everyone else has to pay the full cost of using this service. Everyone must pay the full cost of care if they attend a *private* clinic for emergency treatment.

## How do I see a specialist?

**B**efore your first appointment with any specialist consultant doctor you need to go through your GP. They will refer you on to the consultant.

## Can I see my family doctor outside surgery hours?

**M**any GPs in Clare will be members of ShannonDoc. If your GP is, then outside normal surgery hours if you have urgent medical needs you can phone 1850-212-999 and talk to the staff on duty.

If necessary they will ask you to attend their local treatment centre at Ennis, Ennistymon, Kilrush or Killaloe; or a doctor will decide if a home visit is necessary based on medical need. You must have an appointment before you attend the treatment centre.

ShannonDoc is not an emergency service.

## In case of an emergency call 999 or 112.

The emergency services are Ambulance, Fire Service, Garda Síochána and Coastguard.



# Benefits for asylum seekers

## Asylum seekers are entitled to most medical care free – including some immunisations (vaccines)

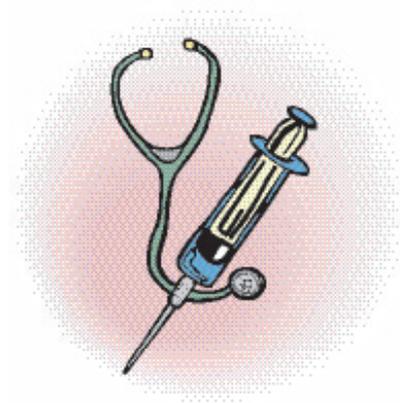
Your local Community Welfare Officer (CWO) can help you find a general practitioner (GP) and will provide you with a medical card application form. In Ennis your CWO will be based in the HSE office in the Sandfield Centre, on Highfield Park, (065) 686 8039.

If you live at the Knocklisheen accommodation centre you will get information about your medical card from the Community Welfare Officer who visits the centre twice a week.

The medical card gives you and your family access to medical services free of charge. If you do not have a medical card, you will be asked to pay for certain medical services. See list of medical services available free of charge on page 3.

If you are pregnant or have small children, the CWO will make arrangements for you to contact the local public health nurse. The nurse will visit you to see if you need any help and will put you in contact with your nearest health centre.

**All these services are provided to you and your family in complete confidence. They are completely voluntary and will not affect your asylum application**



The HSE Health Centre in Ennis is on Bindon Street and you can phone them at (065) 682 8525.

### Medical screening

Free medical screening is available to all asylum seekers. It includes screening for certain infectious diseases such as TB, hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV; and checking the vaccination needs of you and your family. The outcome of any of your medical tests will not affect your asylum application.

Any necessary follow-up medical treatment will be provided for you and your family free of charge under the medical card scheme.

# COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES

## Local HSE health services

Public health services provided in the community in Ireland are sometimes referred to as 'Community Care Services'. They are generally provided by the Health Service Executive (HSE). Community care services may also be provided by voluntary organisations working with, or on behalf of the HSE.

### Community care services

Initially, you should ask your family doctor (GP) about community care services in your area or contact your local health centre.

In general, medical card holders are entitled to community care services free

of charge. Non-medical card holders may also be entitled to these services but it is not always possible to actually get them.

### Public health nurses

Public health nurses are employed by Health Service Executive (HSE) to provide a range of health care services in the community. They are often your first contact with the HSE, as they visit new mothers to check on them and their babies, and provide advice on care, feeding and development. They also provide aftercare to people who have been discharged from hospital and a range of other services.

Public health nurses and community registered general nurses liaise with family doctors (GPs), practice nurses, hospitals, hospices and other health service providers.

They provide services in schools, in

### Co Clare Health Centres

Carrigaholt	(065) 905 8205
Clarecastle	(065) 682 9488
Ennis	(065) 682 8525
Ennistymon	(065) 707 1143
Kildysart	(065) 683 2012
Kilkee	(065) 905 6381
Kilmihil	(065) 905 0155
Kilrush	(065) 905 4200
Lisdoonvara	(065) 707 4194
Scariff	(061) 921 286
Shannon	(061) 718 400
Sixmilebridge	(061) 369 427
Tulla	(065) 683 5264
Kilmaley	GP (065) 683 9748

### HSE services include

- General practitioner services (also called GP or family doctor);
- public health nursing;
- children's health services;
- community welfare;
- podiatry (footcare);
- social work;
- addiction counselling and treatment;
- physiotherapy;
- psychiatric services; and
- home help.

The HSE also provides some special payments (see the 'Welfare supports and entitlement' leaflet in this pack).

health centres, in day care and other community centres and in people's homes. Contact your public health nurse at your Local Health Centre,

## Social workers

The Social Work team in the local HSE office is responsible for providing support to children and families in the community. This involves family support services, and care for older people.

Assistance, advice and support provided by social workers and social work services

provided by your local HSE office are all free of charge.

You can apply directly to your Local Health Centre or hospital for assistance from a social worker.

## Bereavement counselling

The new HSE Bereavement Counselling Service is available to those who have been bereaved as a result of traumatic deaths such as suicide, homicide, accidents at work, home or on the farm and road traffic accidents. You can ask for this service through your GP.

## Where do I get medicines?

You can get medicines from a pharmacy (often called a chemist). You can also find simple medicines like painkillers or vitamins in supermarkets and other shops. Sometimes, the hospital or your GP (family doctor) may give you medicines directly.

Many medicines can only be bought from the pharmacy if you have a prescription from your GP or hospital doctor.

Approved drugs prescribed by your GP or hospital doctor are free to:

- medical card holders; and
- people with hepatitis C who have Health Amendment Act Cards.

If you have a medical card, you will have to pay for some low-cost medicines available without a prescription – even if your doctor recommends that you take them.

## Long Term Illness Scheme

People who have certain conditions, who are not already medical card holders, can get free drugs, medicines and

medical and surgical appliances for the treatment of that condition. These are provided under the Long Term Illness Scheme.

The Long Term Illness Scheme does not depend on your income or other circumstances and is separate from the Medical Card scheme and the GP Visit Card Scheme.

Ask your pharmacist which conditions qualify under the Long Term Illness Scheme.

## Drug Payment Scheme

If you have neither a medical card, nor a GP Visit Card nor a medical condition listed above, you can use the Drugs Payment Scheme. Under this Scheme, individuals or families pay a maximum amount per calendar month towards the cost of approved prescribed medicines.

**Each Sunday, a different pharmacy in your area will be open for a few hours. Details of Sunday opening are displayed in every pharmacy window.**

## Hospitals and emergencies

**H**ospital emergency services will treat serious sudden and unexpected illness or injury only. You should go to your GP for all other treatment.

In an emergency situation, dial 999 or 112 and ask for the ambulance service. These numbers can also be used for fire brigade, Garda (police), lifeboat, coastal and mountain rescue emergencies.

Some hospitals provide emergency service 24-hours a day, seven days a week. In a medical emergency, you can go directly to the Emergency department (also called A&E – Accident & Emergency) without an appointment.

If you call an ambulance to bring you to the A&E in a hospital and hospital staff decide your condition is not an emergency, you may have to wait a number of hours in the 'casualty' section of the hospital before you are treated.

You will then either be treated and sent home or admitted to a ward as an inpatient.



### Emergency opening hours

**T**he Emergency Department at the Mid-Western Regional Hospital in Ennis is open from 8am to 8pm. The Emergency Department at the Mid-Western Regional Hospital, Dooradoyle, Limerick, is open 24 hours a day.

### In an emergency dial 999 or 112

#### Public and private hospitals

**C**lare has a range of public and private hospitals that provide services on an inpatient and outpatient basis. See list on the opposite page.

Patients should not visit a hospital without an appointment, except in an emergency. Your GP arranges hospital appointments for scheduled operations or illness treatments.

There are waiting lists for non-emergency services in many areas.

Acute hospitals in Ireland diagnose, treat and care for seriously ill or injured patients. Small local hospitals may not be able to cater for all illnesses and treatments and you may have to be transferred to a larger hospital or to a specialist hospital.

Everyone living in the country and certain visitors to Ireland are entitled to free maintenance and treatment in public beds in Health Service Executive and 'voluntary' hospitals. You must show that you intend to stay in Ireland for at least one year. You can do this by, for example, showing your work permit, registration card or rent agreement. Some people may have to pay some hospital charges.

#### What do hospitals charge?

**I**f you wish to attend hospital as a private patient you will have to pay the appropriate fee. If you go to outpatients or A&E without a referral from your GP, you

## Regional hospital phone numbers

Mid-Western Regional Hospital, Limerick	
Dooradoyle, Limerick	(061) 301 111
The <b>regional children's hospital</b> is attached to the Mid-Western Regional Hospital in Dooradoyle (above)	
Mid-Western Regional Maternity Hospital	
Ennis Road, Limerick	(061) 327 455
Mid-Western Regional Orthopaedic Hospital	
Croom, Co Limerick	(061) 397 276
Mid-Western Regional Hospital, Ennis	(065) 686 3100

may be charged a fee (set at €00, as from January 2009). The fee does not apply to certain groups including:

- medical card holders;
- people admitted into hospital following attendance at A&E – you will then be charged as an inpatient;
- babies up to six weeks of age, children suffering from prescribed diseases and disabilities, and children referred from child health clinics or school health examinations;
- people who are entitled to hospital services through EU regulations; and
- women receiving maternity services.

### What do inpatients pay?

There is a charge for inpatient (staying in a ward overnight) and day services (admitted to hospital under the care of a consultant, but not staying overnight) in public hospitals. However, no one has to pay more than a certain amount for inpa-

tient or day services in any one year.

The charge does not apply to certain groups including:

- medical card holders;
- children up to six weeks of age, children suffering from prescribed diseases and disabilities, and children referred from child health clinics or school health examinations;
- people who are entitled to hospital services through EU regulations; and
- women receiving maternity services.

### How much do private beds cost?

If you are being treated as a private patient and staying in a private bed in a public or voluntary hospital, you will have to pay a charge on top of that paid for the public hospital inpatient charge.

You will also have to pay for the services of your consultant as a private patient.

# Pregnancy and childbirth

## The Mid-Western Regional Maternity Hospital is St Munchin's on the Ennis Road, Limerick

All women are entitled to free medical care during their pregnancy. This care is available from a GP (family doctor) and a hospital obstetrician. The Health Service Executive (HSE) scheme providing this care is called the 'Maternity and infant care scheme'. Not all GPs take part in this scheme but if your regular GP does not, you can attend another GP of your choice who does.

### Do I need to fill in a form?

Yes. You and your GP fill out an application form for "Maternity and infant care" together and return it to the Local Health Office who will process it so you can be included in the scheme.

If you have received some of your medical care during pregnancy elsewhere, you should bring your medical notes and results of any medical tests with you when attending the hospital or GP.

**If you think you have gone into labour, phone St Munchin's, tell them your symptoms and follow their advice**  
**St Munchin's (061) 327 455**

### You can register your child's birth in:

- the hospital where they are born;
- the Civil Registration Office, HSE Sandfield Centre, Ennis. (065) 686 8050; or
- the Civil Registration Office, St. Camillus' Hospital, Shelbourne Road, Limerick. Phone: (061) 483 763

### How often do I see a doctor?

The GP is the first doctor to see you during your pregnancy – if possible before you are 12 weeks' pregnant. Usually, you will have six more examinations – every second one will be at the hospital.

### Can I attend pregnancy classes?

The public health nurse at your local health centre can tell you about whether or not there are antenatal (pregnancy) classes available in your area. Your GP (family doctor) may also have information about antenatal classes.

Make sure you register the birth of your baby (see above).

## What about long-term illnesses?

If you suffer from a significant illness, for example diabetes or hypertension (high blood pressure), you may be provided with five more free visits to your GP. However, additional GP visits for illnesses that have nothing to do with your pregnancy are not covered as part of the scheme.

## Will I have to pay for hospital?

No. You are entitled to free inpatient (stays overnight) and outpatient public hospital services related to your pregnancy and the birth of your baby.

## What happens when I am home?

After the birth, the GP will examine your baby at two weeks and will examine you and your baby at six weeks. These visits are free.

- Every woman is entitled to free medical care during her pregnancy.
- Don't forget to organise child-care for your other children while you are in hospital.

Apart from these two visits, babies are only entitled to free GP care if their parents have a medical card. Visits to the GP for any conditions related to the baby's health during the six weeks after their birth or after that are not covered by the 'Maternity and infant care scheme'.

The public health nurse visits the mother and baby at home during the first six weeks of the baby's life.



## What tests and vaccines can my baby have?

In Ireland, newborn babies are screened for serious metabolic disorders within 72-120 hours after birth. This involves taking a small sample of your baby's blood from the heel and is known as the "heel prick test".

The formal name for this test is the Guthrie Test. The test may be carried out by your GP or in the outpatients' department of the hospital.

This test can only be carried out if you

give your consent.

These tests are important as early diagnosis and treatment can prevent serious illness.

## Vaccines (immunisations)

The hospital or local Health Centre will ask you for permission to give your newborn baby the BCG vaccine which will protect your baby against TB.

# VACCINES, DISABILITIES

## Immunisations for children

There are 12 diseases that can be prevented by routine childhood immunisation:

- tuberculosis (TB);
- diphtheria;
- haemophilus influenzae type b (hib);
- hepatitis B;
- polio;
- tetanus;
- whooping cough;
- meningococcal C (men

- C) disease;
- pneumococcal disease;
- measles;
- mumps; and
- rubella.

All of these diseases can cause serious complications and sometimes death.

In Ireland, children and young people are entitled to the recommended immunisations free at:

- GP surgeries;

- hospitals;
- health clinics; or
- schools (depending on age).

You must give permission for your children to be vaccinated. If you have any questions talk to your GP (family doctor) or practice nurse. More information is available in several languages at the National Immunisation Office website [www.immunisation.ie](http://www.immunisation.ie)

## Your health



The Health Promotion Unit ([www.health-promotion.ie](http://www.health-promotion.ie)) has leaflets on subjects including: alcohol; breast-feeding; young people; mental health; drugs; sexual health; and smoking.

The smoking quitline is at: **1850 201 203**

For support with alcohol and drugs abuse contact the Clare Community Drug and Alcohol Service, Museum House, Francis Street, Ennis. Phone: **(065) 686 5852**.

## People with disabilities

You can find out about health services for people with intellectual, physical or sensory disabilities at the Health Office in Tobartaoscaín.

The Health Service Executive (HSE) provides a range of services for people with intellectual, physical and sensory disabilities or autism including: assessment, rehabilitation, income maintenance, community care and residential care.

Some services are provided directly by the HSE. Many of the community, residential and rehabilitative training services are provided by

voluntary organisations with grant aid from the HSE.

HSE Administrative Areas Disability Services Managers co-ordinate delivery of services.

### Contacts

Disability services: **(065) 686 3671**.

Aids and appliances (like wheelchairs): phone **(065) 686 3681**.

### Entitlements

Information on all aspects of entitlements, services and supports for people with disabilities, including social welfare, health, tax, housing and legal matters are available from CIC offices

## Dental care services

The HSE provides dental services to children under 16 years of age, Medical Card holders and to EU residents for emergency care.

Emergency dental treatment for the relief of pain and sepsis is available to all children under 16 years of age.

Children attending primary school are screened in 2nd, 4th and 6th classes

and referred for treatment at the local dental clinic.

Medical Card holders can get a list of participating private dental practitioners from their local Health Office or HSE dental clinic. The following treatments are available with a medical card:

- fillings;
- cleaning and polishing;
- extractions;
- dentures; and
- root canal.



## PRSI

Under the Treatment Benefit, if you pay PRSI you will only have to pay for some of the cost of your dental care. Ask your dentist if they take part in this scheme. For more information contact your Local Health Office on (065) 682 8525 or the HSE infoline: 1850 24 1850.

## Family planning

Information on family planning and contraception is available from your midwife, doctor, public health nurse, or practice nurse.

The HSE provides family planning services through:

- maternity and other hospitals;
- health centres;
- public health nurses;
- GPs; and
- family planning groups.

Family planning services are also available from voluntary organisations.

Pregnancy counselling is provided by a number of voluntary organisations. Cura ([www.cura.ie](http://www.cura.ie)) offers sup-

port and help to those who are faced with a crisis pregnancy and it has a branch in Ennis. It is a free and confidential help with crisis pregnancy, phone Ennis (065) 682 9905 or 1850 622 626

Abortion in Ireland is illegal except in very limited circumstances.

The Irish Family Association in Limerick and Galway offers family planning information. [www.ifpa.ie](http://www.ifpa.ie), phone, 1850 495 051.



## Temporary visitors to Ireland



If you are a visitor to Ireland and have a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) you can get free treatment at public hospitals for an illness or injury you develop while on a temporary stay here.

The card does not cover the cost of repatriation and your illness or accident may mean extra travel and accommodation costs, so you should also have travel insurance. For more information <http://ec.europa.eu/>

# Useful contacts

## Phone numbers

<b>Emergency services</b>	<b>999 or 112</b>
<b>Medical Card applications</b>	<b>(065) 686 8076</b>
<b>ShannonDoc</b>	<b>1850-212-999</b>
<b>Limerick Mid-Western Regional Hospital</b>	<b>(061) 301 111</b>
<b>Regional Maternity Hospital</b>	<b>(061) 327 455</b>
<b>Ennis Mid-Western Regional Hospital</b>	<b>(065) 686 3100</b>
<b>Disability services</b>	<b>(065) 686 3671</b>
<b>Family planning</b>	<b>1850 495 051</b>
<b>Clare Immigrant Support Centre</b>	<b>(065) 682 2026</b>
<b>Clare Social Work Service</b>	<b>(056) 686 3907/08</b>
<b>Clarecare</b>	<b>(065) 682 8178</b>
<b>Clare Community and Primary Care Occupational Therapy Service</b>	<b>(065) 686 3653</b>

## Websites

<b>Citizens Information Centre</b>	<b><a href="http://www.citizensinformation.ie">www.citizensinformation.ie</a></b>
<b>Health Service Executive</b>	<b><a href="http://www.hse.ie">www.hse.ie</a></b>
<b>Immunisation office</b>	<b><a href="http://www.immunisation.ie">www.immunisation.ie</a></b>
<b>Irish Family Planning Association</b>	<b><a href="http://www.ifpa.ie">www.ifpa.ie</a></b>

## Contact details for your family doctor

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Address</b>	
<b>Phone</b>	