

# Getting Started:

## An Introduction to Health Care in British Columbia for Newcomer Immigrant Women

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### FACT SHEET 2: HEALTH CARE SERVICES FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY



*Taking care of your health is an important part of adjusting to life in Canada.*

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#### GOING TO A DOCTOR: HOW DOES IT WORK IN CANADA?

When you or someone in your family is sick, you can go to a doctor.

There are two types of doctors in Canada: family doctors and specialists.

A **family doctor** is the first person you go to and probably the one you will see the most. You can talk to them about most health concerns including having a baby, healthy eating or if you are feeling down.

A **specialist** looks at one type of health issue in detail, such as pregnancy or heart disease. To see a specialist, you must talk to your family doctor first.

There are a few ways to find a family doctor:

- Ask at your local settlement agency, friends or neighbours.
- Search the **College of Physicians and Surgeons** website ([www.cpsbc.ca](http://www.cpsbc.ca)) to see a list of doctors in your area and if they are seeing new patients. You can use this website to find a female doctor or someone who speaks your language.

Finding a doctor can take time so you should start searching as soon as you get your BC Services card (see Fact Sheet 1).

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#### IF YOU NEED HEALTHCARE RIGHT AWAY

If you do not have a family doctor and ***you need health care right away, and it is not an emergency***, you can go to a walk-in clinic. Some clinics are open late, seven days a week. You do not need to make an appointment.

You can also get help at any time of the day by calling **8-1-1**. You can speak to someone (such as a nurse, pharmacist or dietitian) about your health concern and where you should go for help. This service is free and is available in many languages.

**For refugee claimants:** You can go to the Bridge Clinic in Vancouver or the New Canadian Clinic in Burnaby or Surrey. You do not need health insurance to go there.

If you have a serious accident or suddenly get very sick, you should go to **Emergency** at a hospital. You do not have to pay if you have Medical Services Plan health insurance.

If you need an ambulance, call **9-1-1**. You will get a bill later in the mail.

## MAKING AN APPOINTMENT TO SEE YOUR DOCTOR

Phone the doctor's office to make an appointment.

If you need an interpreter, you can ask your doctor or specialist to book one for you through Provincial Language Service. Only a doctor, specialist or hospital can book this service.

When you go for your appointment, tell the person at the front desk your name and show them your BC Services card. You will then have to wait until the doctor is ready to see you.

If you are very late or miss your appointment, you may have to pay a fee. This kind of fee is not covered by your Medical Services Plan health insurance.

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## AT YOUR DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT

When you see the doctor, they will ask you to tell them why you are there.

Appointments last 10 to 20 minutes so you should describe only one or two issues during your visit.

The doctor may order tests or give you a piece of paper with a prescription for medicine. It will be up to you to go for the test and to take your prescription to a pharmacy to get your medicine.

If your doctor thinks you need special care, they may send you to a specialist. It can take a long time to see a specialist. If your problem gets worse while you are waiting, you should call your doctor.

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## WHAT IS HEALTH INSURANCE? HOW DO I GET HEALTH INSURANCE?

People living in British Columbia who are Canadian citizens, landed immigrants or government-assisted refugees must have health insurance. Health insurance in British Columbia is paid for through a health insurance plan that is called the Medical Services Plan (MSP). To get this insurance, you need to fill out and mail the application to Health Insurance BC (HIBC). You can get this form at an Insurance Corporation of BC (ICBC) office or online ([www.health.gov.bc.ca/msp](http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/msp)). It may be necessary to visit an ICBC driver licensing office (DLO) to complete enrolment in MSP. If this is the case, written notice with next steps will be mailed to you. It can take three months to qualify for the Medical Services Plan so you should apply to enroll as soon as you arrive in British Columbia. You should buy private medical insurance while you are waiting because if you need medical care, the costs can be high. For more information <http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/msp/infoben/eligible.html#enroll>

If you are a refugee claimant, contact Health Insurance BC to find out if you are eligible for the Medical Services Plan. To contact Health Insurance BC: [www.health.gov.bc.ca/msp/infoben/premium.html](http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/msp/infoben/premium.html)



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For more information about health care services in BC, ask at your local settlement agency or get a copy of the BC Newcomers Guide. [www.welcomebc.ca/newcomers\\_guide/newcomerguide.aspx](http://www.welcomebc.ca/newcomers_guide/newcomerguide.aspx)

To watch a video about the information in this fact sheet go to: [www.bcwomens.ca/newcomerresources](http://www.bcwomens.ca/newcomerresources)  
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