

Charging policy

Only people who meet the eligibility criteria defined in the government's 2003 Eligibility Direction policy qualify for free, publicly funded healthcare in New Zealand. Checking a patient's eligibility is the responsibility of all health providers.

All patients have to prove their eligibility for Northland DHB services by sending us a copy of their passport or birth certificate. Emergency care will be provided to you, but if you are not a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident you may need to pay for care.

Generally the people who are eligible for free healthcare are: New Zealand citizens and permanent residents; work permit holders here for two years or more; specific categories of students; refugee and asylum seekers and Australian and UK citizens who become acutely unwell. For more information on who is eligible for free healthcare please read the detailed guide at the [Ministry of Health website](#).

Doctors, nurses and other clinical and clerical staff cannot confirm a patient's eligibility or costs. This can only be determined by the eligibility team staff. A patient's name and date of birth may be submitted to the NZ Immigration Service to allow confirmation of their immigration status.

Find out more about [healthcare charges at Northland DHB](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

What documents do I need to provide?

You will need to provide either:

- A photocopy of your passport (both the first page and the page showing any relevant visas or permits) **or**
- A photocopy of a NZ birth certificate **or**
- A photocopy of a NZ citizenship certificate **or**
- A letter from immigration of acceptance of refugee status.

None of these have to be certified copies i.e. signed by a Justice of the Peace. We just need a photocopy of the document.

How can I send my documents?

There are four ways you can give us the necessary documentation:

- Post a photocopy of the document to: Central Referrals Office, Whangarei Hospital, Private Bag 9742, Whangarei 0148
- Fax a photocopy of the document to: (09) 430 4115
- Scan the document and email the file to: eligibility@northlanddhb.org.nz
- When you come to the hospital, present the photocopy in person, or bring the original document which will be photocopied and returned to you.

Does everyone in the district have to show these documents?

Only patients who are about to access our services or who have accessed them in the past will have to prove their eligibility. People who have never accessed our services will not be on our database and so will not be able to send in their details in advance.

I was born in NZ, why do I have to show my documents?

Place of birth does not confirm eligibility, which is why it is important that all patients show us their documentation. We realise that people who have been born in New Zealand and received healthcare in the past will think it's inconvenient that they now have to provide their passport or birth certificate to us, but we must be fair and treat everyone equally. You will only need to show us your documents once, no matter how many times you come to us for treatment, as your details will be loaded in our computer system.

If I do not have a passport or birth certificate, is there no alternative? What about a New Zealand driver's licence?

We will only accept three documents as proof of eligibility for free healthcare – passport, birth certificate or citizenship certificate. These are the documents required if someone accesses other social services like a pension. A New Zealand driver's licence is not proof that someone is

a New Zealand citizen or a permanent resident and therefore cannot be used to determine eligibility.

What do I do if I don't have a passport or birth certificate?

You can apply for a passport or request a copy of your birth certificate through the government's [Department of Internal Affairs website](#). A birth certificate costs \$26 and for births before 1998 will take eight working days. After 1998 it is one working day.

If I come to the Emergency Department and am not eligible and am treated, will I have to pay immediately?

In this case you will be treated first and then the Admission Clerk will hand you an invoice for the cost of treatment and you will be required to pay. If you later prove that you are eligible, the invoice will be withdrawn.

How much am I likely to have to pay and what happens if I can't afford it?

Emergency Department visit is a minimum of \$465.00 plus x-rays and other tests. An inpatient ward stay starts from \$960.00 per day and operations start from \$2235.00. We will attempt to work out a payment scheme with you based on what you can reasonably afford.

I have already proved my eligibility to my GP and another health board, why do I have to do it again?

Unfortunately Northland DHB cannot rely on third party evidence; we must see the proof ourselves.