

Enrolment information guide for patients

Why should I enrol?

If you enrol with a General Practice your care will be subsidised by the Government.

General Practices can only enrol you if you are eligible for publicly funded health services.¹

When you enrol you may be asked to show proof which could include a passport or birth certificate; please do not be offended when asked. You will also be asked to complete and sign an enrolment form.

Being an enrolled patient has the following benefits:

- Better access to healthcare with a team that knows you and your needs and care
- Cheaper visits with general or nurse practitioners (may be free for under 14s)
- Cheaper prescription fees (free for under 14s)
- More support with health conditions, including long-term conditions, such as diabetes and high blood pressure
- Access to screening programmes you may be entitled to – such as bowel cancer screening and more – and healthy lifestyle advice, including support to help you quit smoking
- Ongoing vaccination programmes

Enrolment lasts indefinitely, but if you do not visit your GP for three years, you may be removed from the register. You can always re-enrol.

Other circumstances where you may be asked to sign an enrolment form:

Enrolling children (under 16 years)

Parents can enrol and sign for children under 16 years of age, but children 16 years or over must sign their own form.

Enrolling someone else (other than children)

In some circumstances, you may sign for another person if they are unable to consent on their own behalf. This is referred to as 'Signed by Authority'.

Casual patient

If you are enrolled in another practice and just visiting this practice, or you do not meet the enrolment criteria, you can register as a casual patient and complete and sign the 'Casual Patient Details' form. You will be charged the casual rate (higher fee) for your consultation.

Casual patients will not have the benefits of enrolled patients for ongoing support, cheaper fees, recalls and reminders for screening programmes they are eligible for.

Frequently asked questions

What happens if I go to another general practice?

You can go to another general practice or change to a new general practice at any time. If you are enrolled in a general practice and visit another practice as a casual patient, you will pay a higher fee for that visit. So, if you have more than one general practice you should consider enrolling with the practice you visit most often.

¹ Refer to the Ministry of Health website on enrolment for the eligibility criteria:

<https://www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/corporate-information/our-health-system/eligibility-for-publicly-funded-health-services>

What happens if I am enrolled in a general practice but don't see them very often?

If you have not received services from your general practice in a three-year period, it is likely that the practice will contact you and ask if you wish to remain with the practice. If you are not able to be contacted or do not respond, your name will be taken off the Practice and PHO Enrolment Registers. You can re-enrol with the same general practice or another general practice and affiliated PHO at any time.

What if I am not able to afford visits to my general practice?

Eligible patients can ask for a Community Services Card (CSC) or High Use Health Card (HUHC) to help lower the cost of medical appointments. These cards give discounts on different healthcare services, such as lower fees for doctor visits, prescription medications, after-hours appointments, and more.

What is a PHO?

Most general practices are now part of a Primary Health Organisation (PHO). Health New Zealand/Te Whatu Ora contracts with PHOs to provide primary care services in a certain geographical area.

Will I be contacted for surveys?

To improve healthcare services, you may be invited to take part in a national patient experience **survey**. This is anonymous. You can ignore the invitation or choose not to participate and inform the practice team.

Privacy and your health information

Your personal and health information is subject to the Privacy Act 2020 and the Health Information Privacy Code 2020, so the privacy of your information is protected.

The health information that is collected in your medical records is shared with others involved in your healthcare and with other health agencies. This is described fully in the 'Use and Confidentiality of your Health Information' below which you will be shown at the time of enrolling with the practice.

If you do not want your health information shared, you can opt-off sharing, however this may affect the quality of care you receive. There are a few options

- You can remain as an enrolled patient and opt-off sharing health data with the PHO outside of the practice, however as health is funded by the government, there will be limited identifiable data sharing for accountability purposes with the PHO and Ministry of Health.
- If you are a casual patient, then any health data shared for accountability purposes with the PHO and Ministry of Health will be non-identifiable.
- Casual patients can also opt-off any data sharing at all, and this is noted by ticking the opt-off box on the Casual Patient Details' Form.

What about Shared Health Records?

Your GP may participate in Your Health Summary, which allows after-hours clinics or hospitals to see a limited summary of your medical history in an emergency. You can opt-out by informing your GP.

Use and confidentiality of your health information

Your privacy and confidentiality will be fully respected. This fact sheet sets out why we collect your information and how that information will be used.

Purpose

We collect your health information to provide a record of care. This helps you receive quality treatment and care when you need it.

We also collect your health information to help:

- Keep you and others safe
- Plan and fund health services
- Carry out authorised research
- Train healthcare professionals
- Prepare and publish statistics
- Improve government services
- Population health and quality improvement
- Sending reminders or recalls as appropriate.

Confidentiality and information sharing

Your privacy and the confidentiality of your information is really important to us.

- Your health practitioner will record relevant information from your consultation in your notes.
- Your health information will be shared with others involved in your healthcare and with other agencies with your consent, or if authorised by law.
- You don't have to share your health information, however, withholding it may affect the quality of care you receive. Talk to your health practitioner if you have any concerns.
- You have the right to know where your information is kept, who has access rights, and, if the system has audit log capability, who has viewed or updated your information.
- Your information will be kept securely to prevent unauthorised access.

Information quality

We're required to keep your information accurate, up-to-date and relevant for your treatment and care.

Right to access and correct

You have the right to access and correct your health information.

- You have the right to see and request a copy of your health information. You don't have to explain why you are requesting that information, but may be required to provide proof of your identity. If you request a second copy of that information within 12 months, you may have to pay an administration fee.
- You can ask for health information about you to be corrected. Practice staff should provide you with reasonable assistance. If your healthcare provider chooses not to change that information, you can have this noted on your file.

Many practices now offer a patient portal, which allows you to view some of your practice health records online. Ask your practice if they're offering a portal so you can register.

How your health information is used

Examples of how your health information is used is outlined below:

If your practice is contracted to a Primary Health Organisation (PHO), the PHO may use your information for clinical and administrative purposes including obtaining subsidised funding for you.

- Some health information we collect and generate is stored electronically by cloud service providers located in Australia. This information may also be processed (but not stored) by these providers in other countries. The information is encrypted at all times and these providers comply with internationally recognised security standards.
- Health New Zealand (Te Whatu Ora) uses your information to provide treatment and care, and to improve the quality of its services.
- A clinical audit may be conducted by a qualified health practitioner to review the quality of services provided to you. They may also view health records if the audit involves checking on health matters.
- When you choose to register in a health programme (eg immunisation or breast screening), relevant information may be shared with other health agencies.
- The Ministry of Health uses your demographic information to assign a unique number to you on the National Health Index (NHI). This NHI number will help identify you when you use health services.
- The Ministry of Health holds health information to measure how well health services are delivered and to plan and fund future health services. Auditors may occasionally conduct financial audits of your health practitioner. The auditors may review your records and may contact you to check that you received those services.
- Notification of births and deaths to the Births, Deaths and Marriages register may be performed electronically to streamline a person's interactions with government.

Research

Your health information may be used in research approved by an ethics committee or when it has had identifying details removed.

- Research which may directly or indirectly identify you can only be published if the researcher has previously obtained your consent and the study has received ethics approval.
- Under the law, you are not required to give consent to the use of your health information if it's for unpublished research or statistical purposes, or if it's published in a way that doesn't identify you.

Complaints

It's OK to complain if you're not happy with the way your health information is collected or used.

Talk to your healthcare provider in the first instance. If you are still unhappy with the response you can call the Office of the Privacy Commissioner toll-free on 0800 803 909, as they can investigate this further.

For further information

Further detail in regard to the matters discussed in this fact sheet can be found on the Health New Zealand / Te Whatu Ora website at <https://info.health.nz/privacy/privacy-statement>.