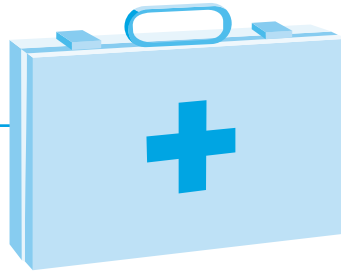


Healthcare



Cork has a range of public and private hospitals, which provide services on an inpatient and outpatient basis. Some provide general services, while others specialise in maternity, orthopaedic, geriatric services etc. A full list of hospitals in Cork can be found in the Golden Pages. Patients should not visit a hospital without an appointment, except in an emergency (see Emergency section below). Hospital appointments are arranged by a family doctor – know as a GP (general practitioner). Healthcare is available in Ireland through both a public and private system.

Public Healthcare

Anyone who is “ordinarily resident” in Ireland can access the public health care system – regardless of nationality. To be considered “ordinarily resident” you must show that you intend to stay in Ireland for at least 1 year (e.g. by showing your work permit, green card, rental agreement etc). Regional health

boards are responsible for providing health and social services in their area – in Cork this is the Southern Health Board. The public health system distinguishes between two categories of patients – medical cardholders and others. People with a medical card are entitled to a full range of medical services, many of which are free of charge. People without medical cards are entitled to public hospital services but must pay a charge.

Medical Card Holders

If you qualify for a medical card you are entitled to the full range of medical services, free of charge. Usually your dependents (e.g. dependent husband/wife and children) will also qualify for free medical services. Services available to medical card holders and their dependents, include:

- Visits to a family doctor (GP)
- Hospital services (in public hospitals only)

- Most medicines, which are prescribed by your doctor
- Maternity and infant care
- Dental, optical and aural services (although these may be restricted)
- Medical appliances, etc

However, some of these services may have long waiting lists. When choosing a family doctor (GP) you should pick one from a list of doctors available from the Southern Health Board – the doctor you pick should be within seven miles of where you live. The doctor should sign an acceptance form (also available from the Health Board), accepting you as a patient, which you then return to the Health Board.

To qualify for a medical card you must pass a means test – that is your income should be below a certain level. The income limit varies depending on your age and family circumstances. Everyone aged 70 years and over, who is normally resident in Ireland, is entitled to a medical card – regardless of their income. You may automatically qualify for a medical card if you already receive certain benefits – such as supplementary welfare allowance, old age and widow/widowers' non contributory pensions, disability or deserted wife's allowances, one-parent family payment to name a few. To find out if you are eligible for a medical card and to get an application form you should contact

the Southern Health Board (see contact details below).

Non Medical Card Holders

Without a medical card, you will be considered as a private patient when you visit your family doctor (or GP) and must pay for their services. Charges for visiting a GP are not set and will vary between doctors so you should check prices beforehand. You will also have to pay for prescribed medicines and drugs – although if these costs are above a certain amount you may get state support. There is no charge for maternity services from family doctors (GPs) during and immediately after pregnancy.

If you do not qualify for a medical card, you can still access services in public hospitals (including consultant services), but must pay a charge. While fees tend to go up each year, the examples below of 2004 prices should give you an idea of what to expect to pay:

- Hospital treatment in a public ward costs €45 per day – but no one is charged over €450 in a year, regardless of the amount of days spent in hospital.
- A visit to the Accident & Emergency Department of a hospital costs €45, unless you are referred by your family doctor (GP).

Contact Details

Southern Health Board,
Abbeycourt House,
George's Quay, Cork.
Tel 021 4965511,
Lo-call 1850 742000.

Private Healthcare

Private healthcare is available to anyone who can pay for it. Many people take out private health insurance to cover the costs of treatment in private hospitals (or private rooms in public hospitals) and visits to private doctors and consultants. The main health insurers in Ireland are VHI and BUPA (see telephone directory for contact details). Each offers a range of insurance schemes, but may not cover you for existing medical conditions.

What to do in an Emergency

In an emergency situation dial 999 or 112 and ask for the ambulance service. These numbers can also be used for fire brigade, Garda, lifeboat, coastal and mountain rescue emergencies. Calls to these services are free but should only be used in emergency cases.

A number of hospitals provide accident and emergency (A&E) services on a 24-hour seven days a week basis. In a medical emergency, you can go directly to the A&E without an appointment. There is a charge for A&E visits (currently €45) unless you have a medical card.

A&E Departments

Cork University (Regional)

Hospital: Wilton, Cork.

Tel: 021 4546400 (Bus No. 14 goes into the hospital complex and drops people at the door of A&E).

South Infirmity Victoria

Hospital: Old Blackrock Road,
Cork. Tel 021 4964333

Mercy Hospital:

Granville Place,
Cork. Tel 021 4271971

Pregnancy

Maternity and infant care services are provided free of charge regardless of whether you have a medical card. Pregnant women should book into a hospital for the birth of a child under the care of a consultant. Pregnant women who have received antenatal care elsewhere, should bring their medical notes and results of any tests previously carried out to avoid duplicating the tests unnecessarily. Women with pregnancy related emergencies can go directly to either of the following hospitals, which have 24-hour admission rooms:

- St. Finbarr's Hospital, Maternity Unit: Douglas Road, Cork.
Tel 021 4966555
- Erinville Maternity Hospital: Western Road, Cork.
Tel 021 4275211.
This hospital is being currently moved and combined with the Cork University Hospital.



Pharmacies/Chemists

While you can buy a number of medicines without a prescription at a pharmacy (usually referred to as a chemist), most are only available if you have a prescription from a doctor (GP). If you have a medical card there is generally no charge for prescribed drugs or medicines (although there are some exceptions). If you don't have a medical card, you will have to pay for prescriptions. However, the Drugs Payment Scheme limits the amount which an individual or family must pay for prescriptions in any one month to €78 (2004) – registration forms for this scheme are available from doctors' surgeries and the Southern Health Board.

While most pharmacies are open from 9am to 5.30pm, there are a number of late night pharmacies which remain open until 10pm and others which open limited hours on Sundays and bank holidays. A list of chemists, including opening hours, is available in the Golden Pages (see page ii).

