

Reciprocal Healthcare Agreement between Ireland and Australia

Information Sheet for temporary residents in New South Wales who are ordinarily resident in Ireland

Ireland and Australia have a reciprocal healthcare agreement (RHCA) that enables visitors from Ireland to Australia the choice to receive medically necessary treatment as inpatients or outpatients in Australian public hospitals. Medically necessary treatment means any ill-health or injury which occurs while the individual is in Australia and requires treatment before their return home. Cover is provided for the duration of the visitor's approved stay in Australia. Subsidised pharmaceuticals under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) are included in the cover.

Eligibility

Only persons ordinarily resident in Ireland before arriving in Australia are covered by the RHCA. In the case of Irish citizens, the provision of a passport is sufficient identification for Australian hospitals; visiting Irish citizens will not require a reciprocal healthcare card or Medicare card. If a person resident in Ireland but not an Irish citizen wishes to avail themselves of the RHCA, they will need to prove to the satisfaction of the hospital that they are ordinarily resident in Ireland. Patients who have difficulty proving their eligibility should call Medicare on 132 011.

Eligible visitors include holders of valid 417 (Working Holiday) and 457 (Temporary Skilled Worker) visas and the RHCA satisfies visa condition 8501, the requirement of 457 visa holders and their family members to maintain adequate health insurance arrangement for the duration of their stay. Visitors from Ireland to Australia cannot avail themselves of the provisions of the RHCA if they are in Australia without a valid visa.

Students from Ireland who are studying in Australia are not eligible for cover under the RHCA and need to take out Overseas Student Health Cover.

Coverage

The RHCA only covers treatment which is medically necessary. Medically necessary treatment means any ill-health or injury which occurs while the individual is in Australia and requires treatment before their return home. The RHCA does not cover pre-arranged or elective treatment, or treatment for which there is no immediate medical necessity. Those people entering the country for the specific purpose of receiving treatment are excluded under the agreement. **The RHCA between Ireland and Australia does not cover out of hospital treatment including treatment by doctors operating in private practice.**

Visitors from Ireland are covered for:

- Free treatment as a public hospital inpatient or outpatient
- Subsidised pharmaceuticals under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

Please note, the term 'immediately necessary care' is broader than emergency treatment and also covers the following:

- Routine primary care
- Subsequent investigation (eg: referrals to pathology, diagnostic of specialist services)
- Pre-existing conditions (any necessary monitoring or treatment)
- Psychiatric care where medically necessary (eg: to stabilise the patient's condition to enable the journey home).





What is Not Covered

The following are not covered by the RHCA:

- Ambulance services
- Dental care
- Optometry services
- Medical repatriation
- Funerals
- Treatment in private hospitals, or as private patients in public hospitals
- Treatment that is not immediately necessary
- Elective treatment
- Treatment that has been prearranged before arrival in Australia
- Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)
- Pharmaceuticals not available under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme

Maternity Services

Maternity services are deemed to be medically necessary and are covered.

- 1) Short Stay Visitor (ie: under 9 months)
 - Routine antenatal care is covered
 - Confinements are not covered unless
 - Emergencies or complications arise (eg: premature births)
 - Special cases (eg: where a patient's visit to Australia is primarily for her, or her partner's work, and the patient has no choice other than to have the baby in Australia)
- 2) Long Stay Visitor (ie: over 9 months) in addition to the above
 - Confinements and antenatal care are covered, including routine ultrasound
 - Tests such as chromosome sampling where medically indicated

Note: If a visitor from Ireland holds a valid temporary visa, has applied for permanent residence and has either a spouse, parent or child who is an Australian citizen or permanent resident, or has legal authority from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) under a business or working visa that adequately covers their legal stay in Australia, then the purpose of their stay would be deemed as genuine, as against arriving in Australia for the specific purpose of having their child born here.

Further Information

The Consulate General of Ireland is not in a position to provide additional information on the implementation of the RHCA. Individuals who require further information on the implementation of the agreement and their eligibility for cover should contact Medicare directly on **132 011**.

Individuals who are uncertain of their obligations and entitlements arising from their visa status in Australia should contact the Department of Immigration and Border Protection on **131 881**.

This Information Sheet is for general information only and not a publication of the NSW Government. Public health organisations in NSW should refer to NSW's Policy Directive PD2011_059 Reciprocal Health Care Agreements.

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