



## HEALTHCARE IN THE UNITED STATES

The healthcare system in the United States is complex and it may be difficult at first to understand. Remember that resettlement staff can help answer your questions and provide you with more information.

### YOUR INITIAL HEALTH SCREENING

Your first contact with U.S. healthcare will probably be at your first health screening. Your Resettlement Agency will arrange for this screening soon after you arrive. The screening will identify health problems that may affect your resettlement, such as your ability to work or your children's ability to go to school. Your children may receive immunizations during the screening because all children enrolling in public school must show proof that they have been immunized.

### HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

There are several different types of healthcare providers in the United States. Here are some common healthcare providers:

**Public Health Departments** provide immunizations against diseases and offer other preventive health services, including testing and treatment for tuberculosis. Preventive health services are services that prevent diseases before they happen. For refugees, these services are generally free or very inexpensive. An appointment is usually necessary.

**Community Clinics and Health Centers** provide basic health services and health counseling. Some also provide dental care and eye examinations. Some clinics in cities treat specific types of patients, such as pregnant women or people with HIV/AIDS. Clinics accept private insurance and Medicaid (government insurance for people with low-income), and many charge fees based on the patient's ability to pay.



## HEALTHCARE

**Private Doctors** are either general practitioners or specialists. General practitioners provide general healthcare, including annual checkups. Specialists work in one area of medicine. Some specialists treat certain groups, such as women or children. Others specialize in one part or system of the body, such as the heart, the eyes, or the feet. You need an appointment to see a private doctor. Before you see a private doctor, you usually have to show that you can pay for the service or that you have insurance.

**Hospitals** are for patients with special problems who need tests and surgery. Normally your doctor will refer you to a hospital or you will be admitted after an emergency room visit. Hospital care is expensive, and you may be asked to show that you can pay for the service or that you have insurance before being admitted. However, emergency rooms at hospitals cannot turn you away for inability to pay.

**Emergency Rooms** are for sudden and serious health problems. You do not need an appointment to go to the emergency room, but they are busy places and you may have to wait a long time if your problem is not serious. Emergency room care is very expensive. If your problem is not an emergency, you should make an appointment at a clinic or doctor's office.

**Urgent Care Clinics** are available in some communities. These clinics are for situations where you have an illness or injury that needs immediate care, but is not serious enough for a visit to the emergency room. You do not need an appointment.



## YOUR HEALTHCARE RIGHTS

In the United States, you have two important healthcare rights. You have the right to interpreter services and you have the right to confidentiality. Tell the hospital or clinic staff that you need an interpreter when you make the appointment or arrive for emergency care. Everything that takes place between you and your healthcare provider is confidential under the law. Your healthcare provider cannot tell your family, your friends, or your employer about your health situation without your permission.

## AMERICAN CONCEPTS OF HEALTH

Most Americans see a doctor once a year for a checkup so that they will know about any health problems before

they become serious. They go to the dentist twice a year to have their teeth cleaned to prevent serious problems with their teeth. Americans believe that many illnesses can be prevented through cleanliness, proper nutrition, exercise, and adequate sleep.

## CLEANLINESS AND PERSONAL HYGIENE

Most Americans bathe or shower every day, brush their teeth twice a day, shampoo their hair often, apply deodorant once a day, and wash their clothes frequently. Stores sell many kinds of products that help people avoid appearing dirty or having any odor of sweat. Personal hygiene can be especially important for getting and keeping a job.

## PROPER NUTRITION

Proper nutrition means eating the right kinds of foods to keep the body healthy. It also means limiting foods that can cause health problems and serious illnesses if they are eaten often and in large amounts. Such foods include those that are high in sugar, salt, or fat (e.g., fried foods, sweets, and sodas).

## MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Americans believe that mental health is as important as physical health. Mental health refers to how you feel, think, and behave as you cope with life. It also refers to how you handle stress. Good health care includes treatment by a mental health professional when it is needed. If you ever feel that life is too hard and you cannot cope with everyday activities, you should seek mental health services. Your Resettlement Agency can help you find these services and will keep your information confidential.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## WILL MY MEDICAL COSTS BE COVERED?

Refugees receive some form of initial health insurance paid by the government. Coverage varies by location and eligibility criteria. While this health insurance will pay for all of your critical health needs, it may not include dental or eye care. You are encouraged to find employment shortly after arrival in order to access private health insurance offered at a cost through your employer. If you have a disability or are over the age of 65, the United States government will provide health insurance at no cost to you.

## WHAT KINDS OF SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?

The laws of the United States protect and help people with disabilities. Your Resettlement Agency will help you navigate and access services designed for refugees with disabilities. Health insurance and cash assistance for disabled refugees is available and refugees can apply for these benefits after they arrive.

## Cultural Orientation Resource Exchange

8719 Colesville Road, 3rd Floor • Silver Spring, MD 20910

For more information, visit the CORE Resettlement Navigator website at [corenav.org](http://corenav.org).



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