

Refugee
Rights

Turkey

Mülteci
Hakları

Merkezi

HEALTH CARE SERVICES
for Persons Seeking International Protection in
Turkey

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

REFUGEE RIGHTS TURKEY: FREE LEGAL COUNSELLING & ASSISTANCE FOR REFUGEES

Türkiye’de Uluslararası Koruma Arayan Kişiler İçin

SAĞLIK HİZMETLERİ

İNGİLİZCE

SORULAR & YANITLAR

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Güncellemesi**

I am seeking international protection in Turkey. Do I have the right to access free healthcare services?

International protection applicants and international protection beneficiaries who are not covered by any medical insurance and who do not have financial means have the right to access free healthcare services provided by public institutions. In order to access this right, you are required to register your international protection application with local DGMM authorities or you must be recognized as an international protection beneficiary.

A Foreigners' ID Number is essential in ensuring access to the right to healthcare services. Within the context of international protection procedures, you and any accompanying family members shall be issued an "International Protection Applicant Identity Card" upon the completion of an interview with DGMM authorities. This document is free of charge and shall include your Foreigners' ID Number starting with 99.

Once your Foreigners' ID Number is issued, you will be able to fully access free healthcare services provided by public institutions.

How do I access healthcare services?

You can access initial diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation services at primary healthcare institutions. Health stations, health centers, maternal and infant care & family planning centers and tuberculosis dispensaries are considered primary healthcare institutions. These centers also provide screening and immunization for communicable diseases, specialized services for infants, children and teenagers, as well as maternal and reproductive health services.

You can also directly approach secondary or tertiary health institutions. While state hospitals are classified as secondary health institutions, research hospitals as well as university hospitals are considered tertiary. There is also the possibility of benefitting from healthcare services provided by university research hospitals with a referral. This is critical as with the exception of emergency cases, you may not be able to access free services in university research hospitals and private health institutions without prior referral.

I have not registered or I have not been issued a Foreigners' ID Number yet. Can I benefit from free healthcare services?

If you have not registered or been issued a Foreigners' ID Number yet, you may only access emergency health services. Thus, in order to avoid any limitation in access to healthcare services, we strongly encourage you to register your international application with DGMM authorities at your earliest convenience.

In addition, according to the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, unaccompanied minors, persons with disabilities, elderly persons, pregnant women, a single mother or a single father with an accompanying child and persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious psychological, physical or sexual violence are recognized as persons with special needs. The Law specifically states that these persons shall be given priority in accessing rights and procedures, including the right to access health care services.

If you or any individual in your family have one of the aforementioned conditions, please make sure to mention this condition during registration. In case you have failed to do so or these conditions arise after your registration, you may also approach registration authorities and demand that your registration status be revised accordingly.

I arrived in Turkey with a valid passport and obtained a residence permit. Can I also benefit from free healthcare services available to persons seeking international protection?

One of the key requirements for residence permits is to have a health insurance policy valid for the duration of the residence permit. Thus, persons who have residence permits are required to rely on this health insurance where necessary. It is therefore not possible for those who have valid residence permits to benefit from free healthcare services available to persons seeking international protection in Turkey.

In addition, the Law on Foreigners and International Protection explicitly states that social security coverage shall be cancelled for persons who at a later date are found to have already had medical insurance or financial means to cover treatment. These persons shall also be required to pay back all covered expenditures related to the treatment and medication.

Is it possible to access free healthcare services in other cities and provinces, other than my assigned “satellite city?”

The fundamental rule is that you may only access healthcare services in your assigned province. However, if it is not possible to receive full treatment in a particular province, and where deemed necessary, you may be referred to another province. In addition, for emergency medical conditions, you can receive health care services without any restriction.

Are there any other requirements that I should be aware of?

It is critical to have a Foreigner’s ID number starting with 99. This number shall ensure that you get a provision from the Social Security System (SGK). As stated above, this ID number will be issued upon the completion of an interview with DGMM authorities. However, if the SGK system fails to give you a provision, please approach the provincial DGMM office where you are registered at your earliest convenience.

In order to benefit from health services provided in hospitals, you are required to get an appointment. You may get this appointment through the 182 phone number. On the date of appointment, you must get a barcode number before seeing your doctor. It is also important to have your “International Protection Applicant Identity Document” with you when you visit the hospital.

What is the scope of free healthcare services?

Secondary and tertiary healthcare services are provided if they fall within the Health Implementation Directive (SUT). Although the general scope of healthcare services is considerably wide, for health issues which do not fall within the SUT or exceed the threshold set forth under SUT, you may be required to make an additional payment.

I do not speak Turkish. Are there interpretation services available during the course of health services?

Although there are interpreters in some health institutions in some provinces, this service is unfortunately limited. However, you may call 444 47 28, a free hotline operated by the Ministry of Health, to access interpretation services in English, French, Farsi, Arabic, Russian and German while you are at a hospital or at a pharmacy.

We also would like to emphasize that you can get an appointment for the hospital you have been referred to from the 182 call center. There is, however, no interpretation assistance in the 182 call center where you get an appointment. Thus, while calling this number, it is important to have the assistance of a Turkish speaking person.

Where can I get medicines?

You may access free medication, prescribed by doctors and falling within the limits established in the Health Implementation Directive (SUT), from pharmacies. In some provinces, you may be requested to pay a patient share. In addition, should a difference occur between the prescribed medication and the provided medication, you may also be required to pay this difference.

Prescriptions may be either electronic or in written form. If your prescription is electronic, please make sure that you have the prescription number. If it has been provided in written form, it is important to have this document with you when you approach contracted pharmacies. Registration is a prerequisite to access medications. Please also make sure to have your foreigners' ID number starting with 99. Finally, when you approach pharmacies to get prescribed medication, you shall also be required to present your identification document.

How I can receive psychological or psychiatric support?

International protection applicants and beneficiaries are also entitled to receive mental health support. In addition to services provided by public institutions, you may also approach civil society organizations offering psycho-social services. You may call us to inquire about the availability of psycho-social service providers in your province.

Are there special provisions for victims of torture or other forms of assault?

As stated above, persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious psychological, physical or sexual violence are recognized as “persons with special needs” and they shall be given priority in accessing rights and procedures, including the right to access health care services.

The Law on Foreigners and International Protection further states that adequate treatment shall be provided to victims of torture, sexual assault or, other serious psychological, physical or sexual violence, in order to address the negative consequences of such traumatic events.

Local DGMM authorities have either staff psychologists or staff social workers and they can provide assistance and information on available services.

What are my rights as a patient in Turkey?

You have the right to access health care services without discrimination, the right to be informed of your health condition and possible treatments, the right to consent or refuse the treatment as permitted by law, and the right to privacy and respectful care. You also have the right to make a final decision on the treatment, the right to benefit from advances in treatment, the right to receive visits and request the company of another person and the right to receive safe and considerate care.

If you believe that your rights as a patient have been infringed, you have the right to make a complaint and where appropriate, to receive compensation for physical or psychological damages that you have suffered.

To this end, you may apply to the Patient Rights Unit in the hospital where you have received healthcare services. In any case, and particularly in cases where you feel that your grievances had not been sufficiently addressed, you have the right to submit a written complaint to the Patient Rights Board under the Provincial Directorate of Health. It is also possible to voice your concerns or grievances through the 184 SABİM Hotline (The Call Centre of the Ministry of Health). This hotline also provides interpretation services.

Refugee Rights Turkey- Contact Information:

Wherever you may be in Turkey, you are welcome to visit our office or get in touch with us by telephone, fax or email all week days from 10:00am to 17:00pm in relation to any questions you may have regarding your rights and obligations as asylum seekers and any problems you may encounter in the legal procedures for asylum in Turkey.

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Refugee Solidarity Network



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