

Syrian Refugee Health Care Options in Ontario

December 17, 2015

Ontario Health Insurance Plan

Ontario has a universal, publicly-funded health care system available through the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP). OHIP pays for most basic medical and emergency services you receive in Ontario as long as you need them for medical reasons.

You must show your Ontario health card when you go for medical help. The card proves that you are entitled to have your health care services paid for by OHIP. You will receive your card when you join the plan. ***Always have your card with you.***

You must apply in person at your nearest [ServiceOntario](#) centre. You must bring:

- **A document from the Government of Canada showing your immigration status.**
 - This will be a Permanent Resident Form given to you by an immigration official. Each member of your family will have their own form.
- **A document that shows you will be living in the province of Ontario.**
 - This can be something in your name that shows the address you will be living at in Ontario.
 - It can be a letter from the organization or group that is helping you settle in Ontario, indicating you

are living in Ontario and an address where ServiceOntario can send your health card.

- If you do not have a document, staff at the ServiceOntario centre will assist you.
- **A document that shows your name and your signature.**
 - If you have a document with your name and your signature, such as a passport from Syria or any other document you may have, please bring it with you.
 - If you do not have a document with your name and signature, ServiceOntario staff will assist you.

Your new health cards will come in the mail **about 3 weeks** after you complete your registration. You will be given a Transaction Receipt when you are at ServiceOntario. You can use this receipt when receiving OHIP insured health services before your new health card is delivered.

Everyone over 15½ years of age must register in person. At the office, your picture will be taken and you will be asked for your signature to include on your health card. A parent or guardian can register anyone younger than 15½ years of age since their health card will not have a picture or signature (these children **do not** need to come with you to when visiting a ServiceOntario centre).

Each eligible member of your family needs to have their own Ontario health card, no matter how old they are.

Interim Federal Health Plan

All Syrian refugees who arrived in Canada, on or after November 4, 2015, including Government-Assisted Refugees and Privately-Sponsored Refugees are eligible for [Type 1 benefits](#) under Interim Federal Health Plan (IFHP). Type 1 benefits include basic coverage, supplemental coverage, and prescription drug Coverage.

Coverage will be for up to a year, starting immediately upon arrival at point of entry.

Coverage for basic health care will stop once you are eligible for coverage under a provincial or territorial health plan. However, supplemental and prescription drug coverage under IFHP will continue for up to a year.

Refugee HealthLine -- 1-866-286-4770

Finding a health care provider is an important first step for many newly arrived refugees in Ontario.

The Refugee HealthLine will play a key role in connecting refugees with various health service providers for transitional care in the short-term, and will be developing and maintaining a registry of providers able to provide care for refugees.

Call this number to register for help in being connected with a health service provider who can assist with initial medical assessments and referral to other health services. This is not an emergency or crisis line.

Health Care Services

Community Health Centres

Community Health Centres are non-profit organizations that can help you and your family see doctors, nurses, social workers, dieticians and other primary health care workers. They also provide health care education and advice. More information can be found at ontario.ca/page/community-health-centres

Community Care Access Centres

Community Care Access Centres (CCACs) are local agencies that provide information about care options in your area. They help people to:

- live independently at home
- apply for admission to a day program, supportive housing or assisted living program, or certain chronic care or rehabilitation facilities
- apply for admission to a long-term care home.

For more information visit healthcareathome.ca

Refugee Health Clinics

Many communities across Ontario have established refugee health clinics to make the transition easier for newly arrived refugees. Contact the Refugee HealthLine at **1-866-286-4770** for more information.

Dental Services

To find a dentist in your area visit

youroralhealth.ca

To find a dentist in Toronto, call the Toronto Academy of Dentistry at 416-967-5649. To find a dentist outside of Toronto, call 416-922-3900.

Senior's Care

Many services are available in Ontario to help seniors lead healthy and independent lives. Find out more at ontario.ca/seniors

TeleHealth Ontario -- 1-866-797-0000

If you are sick but do not know if you need to go the hospital, call Telehealth Ontario. You do not need a health card to access this service. Telehealth Ontario is a free, confidential telephone service. You can call to get health advice from a registered nurse. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can get service in English and French, and translation for some other languages.

Call 1-866-797-0000 from anywhere in Ontario.

When you call Telehealth Ontario, you talk with a registered nurse. The nurse will ask you to describe your problem and answer questions about how serious your problem is. Then the nurse will give you advice about how to take care of yourself. That nurse can also tell you if you need to visit a doctor or give you the phone numbers of community resources near you.

Do not call Telehealth if you know it is an emergency. In an emergency, call 911.

Public Health Units

Public health units (PHUs) focus on the health of the public or the whole community. Public health professionals include doctors, dentists, nurses, nutritionists and many others. Health units provide health promotion and disease prevention programs to inform the public about healthy life-styles and communicable disease control. These programs and services include education in sexually transmitted diseases/AIDS, immunization, education about parenting, health education for all age groups and screening services for certain conditions and diseases.

[Contact \(http://bit.ly/1jMhSMr\)](http://bit.ly/1jMhSMr) your local public health unit for more information.

Healthy Ontario

Information and ideas here to help you and your family enjoy a healthy lifestyle.

- [Smoke-Free Ontario \(ontario.ca/smokefree\)](http://ontario.ca/smokefree)
- [Healthy Eating \(http://bit.ly/1lrw8vR\)](http://bit.ly/1lrw8vR)
- [Active Living \(http://bit.ly/1lrw8vR\)](http://bit.ly/1lrw8vR)

Immunization

Vaccines prevent serious illnesses – including many that are easily spread in schools and daycare centres. For more than 200 years vaccines have been saving lives around the world.

Vaccines in Ontario's publicly funded immunization schedule are provided free of charge if you meet the eligibility criteria. Find out about the required immunization for children attending school or day care in Ontario at ontario.ca/vaccines

Emergencies

For medical emergencies, phone 911. If you or somebody in your family suddenly feels very sick (has severe pain, is unconscious, cannot breathe, is bleeding a lot, has a seizure or has a serious accident), call 911.

If you do not speak English, just say "Help!" and tell the operator the language you speak.

They will get an interpreter who speaks your language. The ambulance, police and fire department will all come to help.

When you call 911, you will need to tell the operator:

- What is happening
- Where you are
- Your name, address and telephone number

Stay on the phone until the operator tells you to hang up. Patients arriving at an Emergency Department or Emergency Room (ER) will be triaged. The ER is often very busy. Unless your life is in danger, it may be several hours before a doctor can see you.

Mental Health and Addictions

Mental Health Helpline

The Mental Health Helpline can provide you with information about mental health services and supports in your community and across Ontario. Call the Mental Health Service Information Line at 1-866-531-2600 or visit them online at mentalhealthhelpline.ca

Drug and Alcohol Helpline

The Drug and Alcohol Helpline can provide you with information about drug and alcohol

addiction services in Ontario. Call the Drug and Alcohol Information Line at 1-800-565-8603 or visit them online at drugandalcoholhelpline.ca

Canadian Mental Health Association - Ontario Division

The Canadian Mental Health Association (ontario.cmha.ca) provides fact sheets and details on how to find health care services in Ontario. It also lets you measure your stress levels and understand the connection between physical and mental health.

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (camh.ca) provides concise information about addictions and mental health issues. Whether you are an individual looking for a fact sheet on bipolar disorder, a parent concerned about drug use, or a service provider hoping to find resources in another language, you should find what you are looking for here.

Medication and Prescriptions

For Syrian refugees who have coverage under the Interim Federal Health Program, prescription medications and other products listed on provincial-territorial public drug plans are covered for up to one year. The Ontario Health Insurance Plan does not cover drug prescriptions. If your doctor gives you a prescription for medicine, you must take it to a pharmacist.

Pharmacists are health care professionals who can give you the medication that your doctor prescribes. They work in drug stores or in pharmacies in larger stores, hospitals and community health centres.

Pharmacists:

- Check that the dosage (the amount) of your prescription is correct.
- Tell you about possible side effects.
- Check for reactions with other medicines you are taking.
- Explain how to take the medication.
- Answer any questions you may have about your medication. Drug prescriptions can be very expensive.

Pharmacies usually charge you a dispensing fee. A dispensing fee is the amount you pay for the pharmacist to prepare your drug prescriptions and is added to the cost of the medication.

Community Support Services

Caredove (caredove.com) connects seniors, people with disabilities and their caregivers to local community services (Meals on Wheels, Adult Day Programs, Housekeeping, Friendly Visiting, Group Dining, Transportation and more) to enable them to live independently and safely in the community.

Other health care information for newcomers

- Health Care Connect can refer you to a family doctor or a nurse practitioner who is accepting new patients in your community. Find more information at ontario.ca/healthcareconnect
- Find more information about health care services near you at ontario.ca/healthcareoptions
- Find resources providing useful health care information for newcomers, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and intersex

identified individuals (LGBTQI) at settlement.org

- In Ontario, an individual can choose a physician or a midwife for their prenatal, labour and birth, and postpartum care. To find a midwife, visit the Association of Ontario Midwives (www.aom.on.ca) website.

Questions?

Contact ServiceOntario, Infoline between 8:30 am to 5:00 pm. Staff are ready to help you in English, French and 20 other languages. Call:

- 1-866-532-3161
- TTY 1-800-387-5559
- In Toronto, TTY 416-327-4282