

# Pacific Regional Centre for Healthy Aging

Understanding the System

Finding Services

List of Services

Payment Options

How it Works

Where to Start

Leaving the Hospital

Finding Primary Care

Making Appointments Work

Resources

## Understanding the Health Care System

Our public health care system has many services for older adults and their caregivers. Getting support can be as easy as picking up the phone, watching a video, or reading a website.

The best time to find health care services is **before a health care crisis**.

It's important to take the time to learn about what programs are available to you, how to access services and where to ask for help.

This site and its resources is a great place to start.

## Finding Home and Community Care Services

The term *home and community care* refers to services for people who live at home but who are having trouble managing because of health challenges. There are many of different services designed to help people remain healthy and independent in their homes.

Get **help** to figure out which ones are best for your situation.

You can also get help finding and understanding home and community care services by contacting [211](#) British Columbia. You can call 2-1-1 at any time of the day or night or you can go to their [website](#). 211 British Columbia is a free, confidential service that connects people to helpful resources in their community. It is also available in over 240 languages.

This website talks about home and community care services offered by the B.C. public health care system. Similar services are also offered by private companies and community non-profit organizations. You can learn about these from the **Home and Community Care Program** in your region, which is run by your health authority.

## What Services are Available?

- **Home support:** Trained workers come to your home to help with tasks and care. For example, they can include bathing, simple meals, and medication assistance. This helps you remain independent and in your own home as long as possible
- **Adult day programs:** Older adults spend the day with other program participants and take part in organized activities, with support from a health care team. The social contact and activities have been shown to improve cognition
- **Care communities:** Older adults who can no longer be supported in their own home have a variety of options. Different levels of support range from seniors' independent living to light assistance to long-term care
- **Respite care:** Older adults can stay in a residence, with staff to help them, for a few days or several weeks. This gives caregivers relief. Respite can also help a client become more independent or recover after they get out of hospital
- **End-of-life services:** These can be at home, in an assisted living residence, long-term care facility, or hospice (a care facility for end of life)

## Do I Have to Pay?

- Depending on your situation, you might have to pay all or some of the costs
- Your regional Home and Community Care Program will assess your needs and financial situation to see if you qualify for full or partial subsidy
- Payment follows a sliding scale
- TIP: Take the time to figure out the pricing system. In some situations, you might save money by using a private company or non-profit community group

[Click here to learn more](#) about the different home and community care services and the fee structure.

## How Does the Process Work?

### 1. Referral

Any health care provider can give you a *referral*. This means the health care worker formally connects you to the people who organize these services.

You can also do a *self-referral* by **contacting the Home and Community Care program** at the health authority for your region and telling them you need help.

### 2. Assessment

Someone from the Home and Community Care office will assess your needs. This person will be your *case manager*. They will talk to you about your health, your finances, and your home situation.

Based on the assessment, the case manager will tell you what services you can get and if you need to pay a fee. You may be put on a wait list for some services.

**TIP:** Tell the case manager everything that is important about your situation. For instance, let them know if you (or someone you are caring for) needs someone who speaks your language. The better they understand your situation, the easier it will be to connect you to the right help.

### **3. Receiving care/who to talk to**

The *case manager* will help organize your services.

If your situation changes and you think you need more or less care, or different services, contact your case manager. This person is your guide to the home and community care system.

If you are getting home support, keep the contact information for your *home support supervisor* handy. You can call or email them with requests or questions.

## **Where Do I Start?**

Talk to your health care provider or contact the health authority for your region.

[Fraser Health](#)

[Interior Health](#)

[Island Health](#)

[Northern Health](#)

[Vancouver Coastal Health](#)

Learn more about how to arrange for home and community care, including tips on getting ready for an assessment, [here](#).

## **In the Hospital? Plan Ahead to Get Help When You Leave**

- Ask to speak to the home health liaison, community health nurse, or the social worker. They can connect you to services in your community
- Hospital staff will create a discharge plan—a plan for managing your move out of the hospital and your time back home. This will help you fully heal and recover
- Let hospital staff know if you think you might need help at home. Even if you don't usually use home support, you can get this service for two weeks after leaving the hospital

## **Finding a Primary Care Provider**

A primary care provider

- Is typically the person you see first for a health concern
- Is for your everyday, regular health care
- Helps you manage an ongoing issue
- Is often a family doctor or nurse practitioner
- Ideally, works with you over the long term and gets to know your history, needs, and wishes

If you do not have a primary care provider, you might be put on a waiting list. The sooner you do this, the sooner you will be connected to a primary care provider.

**Register to be linked to a primary care provider [here](#).** If you are having trouble registering, call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for the deaf and hard of hearing) anytime to talk to someone who will guide you through the process. Translators are available in 130 languages.

**If you don't have a primary care provider, or if they are not available**

- Find out where to get medical help right away using the [Pathways Medical Directory](#)
- Find walk-in clinics, urgent and primary care centres, emergency departments, hospitals, mental health programs, home care programs, pharmacy services, laboratory services, and more in the online [HealthLink BC Directory](#). For help searching the directory, call 8-1-1
- If you are a resident living in the Fraser Health region, you can call Fraser Health Virtual Care and speak with a registered nurse, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven-days-a-week

## Getting the Most out of a Health Care Visit

### Making the Appointment

When you make an appointment with a family doctor, you can ask for a counselling session. This gives you more time.

### Prepare Before You Go

- Make a list of everything you want to share with your primary care provider
- Write down questions you want to ask (see [Questions to Ask](#))
- Create a detailed health history to share with your care team
- Make a list of all medications you take, including prescription, over-the-counter, and supplements

### Going to the Appointment

- Take a family member or friend with you
- Bring along any devices or aids you use for medical reasons—especially if it's an appointment specifically for this reason, such as vision or hearing care
- For appointments in an office, arrive early and leave time for traffic and parking
- For appointments at home, find a space that is private and doesn't have distractions

### At the Appointment

- Take notes or have a companion do this. Have a notebook just for medical notes
- Remember, you are an expert in your own life
- Don't be afraid to ask for explanations of any words or advice you don't understand
- This [list of questions](#) will help you get care that can improve your health and your quality of life

Get [tips on preparing for surgery](#) and [recovering from surgery](#)

# Resources

## Phone and Online Support

### Call 8-1-1 for 24/7 help

This will connect you to [HealthLinkBC's health service navigators](#). They can

- Answer basic health care questions
- Help you find your way around the health care system
- Connect with a registered nurse, registered dietitian, qualified exercise professional, or pharmacist

Call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for the deaf and hard of hearing)

Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week

Translation services are available in over 130 languages

For non-emergency situations only

### Use an [on-line directory](#) of health care services

The [HealthLinkBC Directory](#) lets you search for health services provided by the B.C. health care system and non-profit groups.

You can search for walk-in clinics, urgent and primary care centres, emergency departments, hospitals, mental health programs, home care programs, pharmacy services, lab services, and more.

If you need help using the directly, call 8-1-1 to speak with a health service navigator (7-1-1 for the deaf and hard of hearing).

### Get connected to support and services at [Where Older Adults Can Get Help](#)

This [HealthLinkBC webpage](#) directs you to help with

- home care
- household tasks and yard maintenance
- respite care (providing a break for caregivers)

It also connects you to

- community supports and peer groups
- programs to help people facing chronic illnesses
- the Office of the Seniors Advocate

Use the [Office of the B.C. Seniors Advocate](#) website.

#### **This resource**

- is simple and easy-to-use
- lists resources, including how to sign up for the Medical Services Plan (health care insurance) and PharmaCare (which will help cover the cost of medications)
- answers to questions such as “Can I get help paying for my dental care?” and “How can I find information about long-term care facilities in my community?”

## **Help for Newcomers and Immigrants**

### **Finding Your Way Around Our Health Care System: A Guide for Newcomers to Canada**

A booklet about our health care system. Read it online, download, or print.

[In English](#)

[In Arabic, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Pashtu, Farsi, Punjabi, Somali, and Urdu](#)

### **[Getting Started: An Introduction to Health Care in British Columbia for Newcomer Immigrant Women](#)**

A 4 ½-minute video about how to get health care insurance, produced by B.C. Women’s Hospital. This link will also get you to fact-sheets in [Arabic](#), [English](#), [Farsi](#), [French](#), [Korean](#), [Mandarin](#) and [Punjabi](#) on getting health insurance and on finding health care services

### **[South Asian Newcomer Resources](#)**

A website to help find your way around the health care system, including how to get care in your own language.

## **Help for Caregivers**

### **[Coach Caregiver: Navigating Health Care](#)**

This video from the Family Caregivers of B.C. offers tips and advice for navigating the health care system and communicating with the person you care for.

## **Help for People with Alzheimers and their Caregivers**

[First Link® dementia support](#) connects people living with dementia and their care partners to support services, education, and information.

- English: 1-800-936-6033 (Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.)
- Cantonese and Mandarin: 1-833-674-5007 (Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.)
- Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu: 1-833-674-5003 (Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.)

## **Help for First Nations and Indigenous Peoples**

**Every region in BC has a First Nations and Indigenous Peoples' health care advisor.** They help with

- navigating the system
- finding health care services
- ensuring care is culturally safe and appropriate

These are organized by B.C.'s five health authorities. Find them here

[Northern Health Aboriginal Patient Liaison Program](#)

[Fraser Health Indigenous Health Liaison](#)

[Island Health Aboriginal Liaison Nurses](#)

[Interior Health Aboriginal Patient Navigator Service](#)

[Vancouver Coastal Health Indigenous Patient Care Quality Liaisons](#)

Not sure which health authority you are in? Find out [here](#)

The [First Nations Health Authority wellness resource page](#) connects you to **Indigenous cancer patient navigators**, the **First Nations Doctor of the Day Program**, and more.

## Help for LGBTQ+

[TransCare BC's Health Navigation Team](#)