



# FACT SHEET: IMMIGRANTS AND HEALTHCARE

## HELPING YOU FIND HEALTH CARE

Burnaby is home to a large and diverse immigrant and refugee population, each with unique healthcare needs and cultural backgrounds.

The complex process of navigating the Canadian healthcare system, combined with language barriers and limited awareness of available services, often leads to reduced access. With funding from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, the BIPT has compiled this fact sheet to assist newcomers and those supporting them.

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## BARRIERS TO HEALTHCARE ACCESS EXPERIENCED BY NEWCOMERS

- **Language Barriers:** Many immigrants and refugees face difficulties communicating with healthcare providers due to limited proficiency in English. This obstacle may lead to misunderstandings, misdiagnoses, or inadequate treatment.
- **Lack of Health Insurance:** Newcomers should apply for the B.C. Medical Services Plan (MSP) as soon as they arrive. It takes three months for applications to be processed. Those who do not purchase private health insurance during this time are without access to healthcare services.
- **Cultural and Social Factors:** Certain cultural beliefs and practices may impact individuals' willingness to seek medical help, leading to delayed or avoided care.
- **Limited Awareness of Services:** Immigrants and refugees may lack awareness of available healthcare programs, resources, and how to access them, making it challenging for them to utilize the services they are entitled to.
- **Socioeconomic Disparities:** Many immigrants and refugees experience financial hardships, making healthcare expenses a burden and discouraging them from seeking medical attention when needed.



## AVAILABLE MEDICAL SERVICES

**Burnaby offers a comprehensive healthcare system with a wide range of medical services:**

- **Family doctors and general practitioners.** To get assistance to find a family doctor, visit the [Burnaby Division of Family Practice](#) and add yourself to the Patient Attachment Waitlist. You can also register with the [Health Connect Registry](#) to be matched with a family doctor. Warning: There is a shortage of family practitioners, and delays are likely.
- **Walk-in clinics** for non-emergency medical issues. If you have a health concern and you do not have a family doctor, cannot get an appointment with your family doctor, or need assistance after hours, you can go to a walk-in clinic. Services are free if you have a health card. If you do not have a health card, you can still see a doctor, but you will have to pay a fee. This is a list of [walk-in clinics in Burnaby](#).
- **Hospitals and emergency rooms** for urgent medical care. If you have a health emergency, you should go to the emergency room at the [Burnaby Hospital](#). It is located at 3935 Kincaid Street.
- **Urgent and Primary Care Centres (UPCCs)** provide access to same-day, urgent, non-emergency health care. The [UPCC](#) in Burnaby is located at 7315 Edmonds Street.
- **Burnaby Primary Care Networks** provide services to individuals who do not have a family doctor or need help managing their healthcare. There are three PCNs in Burnaby, to learn more go to [Burnaby Primary Care Networks](#).

## SIGNING UP FOR THE BRITISH COLUMBIA MEDICAL SERVICES PLAN

The Medical Services Plan (MSP) is the provincial health insurance program. It covers medically required services, including doctor visits, diagnostic tests, and hospital stays. Here's what you need to know:

**Eligibility:** Permanent residents, refugees, and certain work permit holders are generally eligible for MSP coverage. Temporary residents and visitors may have limited coverage.

**Enrollment:** You must apply for MSP coverage as soon as you arrive as a Permanent Resident in British Columbia. Your healthcare coverage will start three months after your arrival date. Apply as soon as possible to avoid any delays in accessing healthcare services. To enrol, you need to obtain a B.C. Services Card, which you do at an ICBC driver licencing office. In Burnaby these are located at 232 - 4820 Kingsway and 3880 Lougheed Highway. You will need to provide primary and secondary identification documents. For more information, visit [How to Apply](#).

\*If you are a refugee claimant or an asylum seeker, you can access a range of supports including healthcare. To learn more, visit [BC Charms Refugee Claimant Navigation Website](#).



# EMERGENCIES, ADDITIONAL SERVICES, EXTRA COVERAGE

## 1. Emergency Services – 9-1-1

In case of a medical emergency, call 9-1-1 or go to the nearest hospital's emergency department. Emergency services are available 24/7 and are free for all residents, regardless of their MSP coverage status. There is often a long wait to get emergency services; [check wait times here](#).

## 2. Non-Emergency Services – 8-1-1

If you have a non-emergency health need, you can call 8-1-1 to speak to a health service navigator who can help you find health information and services or connect you to a registered nurse, a pharmacist and other healthcare professionals. This service is available in more than 130 languages and you can call any time of the day or night, every day of the year. To learn more about 8-1-1, visit [HealthLinkBC](#).

## 3. Healthcare and Related Services – 2-1-1

[BC 211](#) is a free service available to assist you find a range of services including health-related services, home health support, mental health services and much more. If you call 2-1-1 an operator will assist you find the services you need. This service is available in more than 150 languages and you can call any time of the day or night, every day of the year.



**4. BC Pharmacists** If you have a minor health issue, you can book an appointment to see a pharmacist. You can complete an assessment online or go into a pharmacy without an appointment. They can assess, give you healthcare advice and prescribe medication for minor ailments. To learn more about these services, visit [BC Pharmacists](#).

## 5. Prescription Medications

Prescription medications can be expensive, and MSP does not cover all prescription costs. However, you can access financial assistance through:

- [Fair PharmaCare](#): This program assesses your ability to pay for prescription medications and provides financial assistance accordingly. Services are available in several languages.
- Private Insurance: Some employers offer private insurance that includes prescription drug coverage.

## 6. Supplementary Health Coverage

Dental care, vision care, and certain medications are not covered by MSP. Consider getting private health insurance to cover these services. Some employers may offer supplementary health coverage as part of their benefits package.





# HEALTH PROMOTION AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

## 1. Preventative Care and Health Promotion

Taking care of your health through preventive measures is essential. Here are some tips:

- **Immunizations:** Ensure you and your family are up to date with vaccinations as recommended by public health authorities.
- **Healthy Lifestyle:** Adopt a balanced diet, engage in regular physical activity, and avoid smoking and excessive alcohol consumption.
- **Mental Health:** Don't hesitate to seek support if you're facing mental health challenges. Resources are available to help you cope with stress and mental health concerns. Visit [Virtual mental health supports](#) for more information on getting immediate help, free or low-cost counselling, suicide prevention, addiction programs, and other mental health issues.

## 2. Community Health Resources

Burnaby offers various community resources that can help improve your health and well-being:

- **Public Health Units:** These provide immunizations, maternal and child health services, and health education.
- **Settlement Services:** There are many immigrant and refugee serving agencies in Burnaby that assist newcomers with health-related information and integration into the community. To find a list of settlement service providers in Burnaby, go to [NewToBC Immigrant Programs and Services](#).
- **Advanced Care Planning:** This guides you to write down your wishes for present or future healthcare treatment if you cannot make decisions for yourself. To learn more, visit [Planning for Advanced Care](#).
- **Medical Equipment and Devices:** The BC Ministry of Health can assist those in need. To learn more, visit [here](#).
- **Interpretation:** The Provincial Health Services Authority offers an interpretation and translation services in more than 200 languages. To learn more, go to [Provincial Language Services](#).





# LANGUAGE SUPPORT AND CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

**Burnaby offers a comprehensive healthcare system with a wide range of medical services:**

## 1. Language Support

Language barriers can be challenging when accessing healthcare services. Supports include:

- **Language-Specific Resources:** Community organizations can provide print and web resources in various languages.
- **Interpretation:** The Provincial Health Services Authority offers interpretation and translation services in more than 200 languages. Go to [Provincial Language Services](#).

## 2. Cultural Considerations

Understanding the Canadian healthcare system and cultural norms can enhance your healthcare experience:

- **Respect for Privacy:** Any medical information and your medical files are confidential and will only be shared with your consent.
- **Informed Consent:** Healthcare providers will explain treatment options, and it's essential to ask questions and give consent before any medical procedures.
- **Health Beliefs:** Feel free to discuss your health beliefs and practices with your healthcare provider to receive culturally competent care.

Remember, taking an active role in managing your health and seeking assistance when needed is crucial to leading a healthy and fulfilling life in Burnaby.

For additional information and personalized guidance, don't hesitate to reach out to local healthcare providers, settlement services, or community organizations. Welcome to Burnaby, and best wishes for a healthy future!

## ABOUT THE BIPT

Since 2007, the Burnaby Intercultural Planning Table (BIPT) has been collaborating with immigrant and refugee service providers to create dialogue to identify the needs of newcomers and share resources that will enhance their integration and settlement in our community. The BIPT's mission is to work collaboratively to facilitate the integration of immigrants and refugees.

Research and development of this fact sheet was possible with funding from the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

For more info on the Burnaby Intercultural Planning Table (BIPT), check out our website at [bipt.ca](http://bipt.ca) or contact:

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