
Hospitals in Victoria

Summary

- Victoria's hospital system is made up of private and public hospitals (including day procedure centres).
 - Care as a public patient in Victorian public hospitals is free to all Australians and permanent residents of Australia.
 - You can choose to be treated as a public or private patient in a public hospital.
 - If you have private health insurance, you can have some control over the timing of your medical treatment.
 - There are more than 200 public and private hospitals (including day procedure centres) across Melbourne and regional Victoria.
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Victoria's hospital system is made up of public and private hospitals (including day procedure centres). These healthcare services receive funding from a range of different sources, depending on the types of patients they treat and the treatment services they provide.

Public hospitals are funded by both the state and federal governments, while private hospitals and day procedure centres are funded by many sources, including Medicare, private health insurance funds, the Department of Veteran's Affairs, the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, third party insurers, and patients.

There are many hospitals across Melbourne and regional Victoria. Some service a particular community need, such as maternity services, laboratory tests or x-rays.

As well as providing clinical services, public and private hospitals have an important role in supporting the education and training of health professionals including doctors, nurses, midwives and allied health staff (such as physiotherapists and occupational therapists). Public and private hospitals also support professional services like health information managers and community liaison staff.

The biggest city and specialty hospitals provide specialised services, such as heart surgery, brain or spinal surgery, intensive care and care for complex cases in areas like child birth or major surgery. Some of these hospitals also provide clinical services and advice for all Victorians for things like organ transplants, burns and neonatal intensive care.

Many smaller city and rural hospitals in Victoria provide a wide range of services, including inpatient services (acute medical, surgical, emergency care), outpatient services, mental health services (both inpatient and outpatient), allied health services and diagnostic services (for example, x-rays and blood tests).

Where you live, the treatment you need and your health insurance status all determine which hospital you attend.

Emergency care

Larger health services in the city, outer suburbs and regional towns provide 24 hour care with specialist emergency staff in their emergency departments (ED). Both public and private hospitals operate EDs.

Smaller rural health services may provide emergency care through their urgent care centres or primary injury services. There are 50 urgent care centres in Victoria and 28 primary injury services in rural hospitals that provide different levels of emergency care, supported by local doctors on-call. These services may not be open 24 hours a day.

Urgent care centres provide care for minor injuries and illness. In an emergency, they can provide initial resuscitation and limited life support to patients in a critical condition, before the patient is transferred to a larger hospital.

Victorian public hospitals

Treatment in Victorian public hospitals is free to all Australians and permanent residents of Australia. You can

choose to be treated as a public patient or a private patient when you are admitted to a public hospital. If you are admitted as a public patient, your costs are paid for in full through state and federal government funding. Private patients in public hospitals can choose their doctor.

The Department of Health & Human Services has a full list of Melbourne metropolitan and rural **public hospitals and health services**.

The **Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme (VPTAS)** also provides assistance to people who need to travel long distances to access specialist health services.

Victorian private hospitals and day procedure centres

There are many private hospitals and day procedure centres across Melbourne and regional Victoria. They provide a wide range of services, including:

- inpatient and same day medical and surgical care
- emergency medicine
- intensive care
- heart surgery
- child birth and neonatal care
- oncology
- renal dialysis
- mental health services
- rehabilitation.

Patients' fees in private hospitals and day procedure centres are covered by a combination of Medicare, private health insurance and the patient's own funding. Depending on the situation, other insurers such as **Transport Accident Commission (TAC)** may fund a patient's visit to a private hospital.

If a person chooses to go to a private hospital and doesn't have private health insurance, they will have to cover their own costs.

The Department of Health & Human Services has a full list of Melbourne metropolitan and **rural private hospitals and day procedure centres**.

Differences between public and private hospitals

There are some differences between the healthcare provided by private and public hospitals.

Costs

If you're admitted to a public hospital, there is no cost for treatment (provided you are an eligible public patient). This includes emergency services, inpatient and outpatient care, as well as elective surgery.

Private patients can use their private health insurance at public or private hospitals (if their insurance package covers the costs of the procedure they are having). Medicare pays for 75 per cent of the associated medical costs and the patient or private health insurer pays for the remaining costs, including accommodation and other associated costs.

Waiting times

Attending specialist clinics and having elective surgery at a public hospital often involves a waiting period. How long you have to wait depends on how urgent your problem is and what type of hospital you use.

If you need elective surgery, are covered by private health insurance and want to have treatment in a private hospital or day procedure centre, you may be able to have your treatment sooner than in a public hospital.

Choices

Patients with private health insurance are able to choose their own doctor or surgeon in both public and private

hospitals. In private hospitals, you may have more control over when you will have your treatment.

Private rooms

Private patients can request a private room (though sometimes this may not be available).

Going into hospital

There are many reasons you may have to go to hospital. You may need surgery, emergency care or have an appointment to attend a specialist clinic. Specialist clinics usually require a referral from your doctor, although some clinics use a self-referral system.

A planned admission (also called an 'elective admission') involves getting your doctor's referral to a specialist clinic or private hospital to see a specialist or surgeon.

Where to get help

- Your GP (doctor)
- Your nearest hospital

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