
Transport to, from and between hospitals

Summary

- If you know you have to go to hospital for surgery, planning ahead will make getting there and getting home run more smoothly.
 - Think about traffic, where you will park and which route you will take.
 - There is help available for country patients who have to travel a long way for their care. Speak to a hospital social worker about your options.
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If your hospital stay isn't urgent and you know in advance that you have to go to hospital, planning your trip will help to make sure you get there on time and then get home without delay.

How you get to and from hospital will depend on your condition and where you live. For example, you might be recovering from an operation, taking a baby home or having to travel a long distance.

Getting to and from hospital

Some things to think about when planning your trip to and from hospital are:

- your mode of transport (such as public transport, private car or taxi)
- the route you will take,
- how long you will need for the trip (especially if during peak hour traffic)
- where you will park (if using a private car)
- whether you need medical help during your journey
- whether the vehicle suits your needs (for example, if you have a baby or a wheelchair).

If you are using public transport, allow plenty of time in case of cancellations or delays.

When planning your trip home (or to another service such as a rehabilitation hospital), you might not be able to drive yourself, so you will have to make other arrangements.

Patient transport services

Non-emergency patient transport (NEPT) services provide non-urgent transport to, from and between hospitals for people who need medical assistance or clinical monitoring.

People who need NEPT are often being transferred between hospitals for treatment. Your doctor will decide if you need medical monitoring or assistance during transport and will authorise it for you. Only authorised health professionals can approve the use of NEPT.

Patient transport costs

The cost of patient transport services is not covered by Medicare. Some ways you can cover the costs patient transport services include ambulance membership subscription, private health insurance, health care or pension cards, or Department of Veterans Affairs card.

Transport for rural and regional patients

If you live in rural or regional Victoria, you might have to travel for healthcare if the services you need are not available in your area.

Your local doctor may refer you to an outpatient clinic or for treatment in a hospital in your closest regional centre or Melbourne. You may have to travel back and forth a few times or have an extended stay in hospital. After you

are discharged from hospital, you may need to travel for ongoing care.

When preparing for a long journey, make sure you are clear about:

- where you are going (the address of the healthcare service)
- who you are seeing (the name of the healthcare professional)
- how you will get there
- where you will stay if you will not be returning home on the same day
- how much your travel and accommodation will cost
- how you will get home.

When it is time to go home, ask whether you will need to come back for follow-up appointments so you can plan your transport.

Hospital social workers

Social workers at regional and Melbourne hospitals can give you information, and support, help you find travel assistance and advocate for your needs. When you phone the hospital to make your appointment, ask to speak to a social worker if you have any questions about your journey.

Victorian Patient Travel Assistance Scheme (VPTAS)

The Victorian Patient Travel Assistance Scheme (VPTAS) is a Victorian Government initiative that helps rural and remote Victorians with travel and accommodation costs when they need to travel more than 100 kilometres for healthcare.

Your local doctor or hospital can help you access VPTAS forms or you can get them from the VPTAS website.

Travellers Aid

Travellers Aid helps people with special needs, such as frail people and people with disabilities, at three locations in Melbourne – Southern Cross Station, Flinders Street Station and City Village.

The largest centre at Southern Cross Station provides a comfortable lounge area and has free buggy transport, manual wheelchair access and personal guides to help people get around the station.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Hospital social worker

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