

Rights of asylum seekers to health care:

In Sweden, asylum seekers under the age of 18 years have by law the same rights to health and dental care as Swedish children. This means that all health and dental care is free for them.

Asylum seekers over 18 have limited rights to health care. They have the right to:

- A medical examination
- Emergency health or dental care
- Childbirth care
- Prenatal care
- Contraception counselling
- Care in connection with an abortion
- Care in connection with the law on sexually transmitted disease

At *every* health care visit in Sweden, you must show your Asylum Seeker (LMA) card. If you have not received your Asylum Seeker (LMA) card, you should bring the receipt of your application for asylum.

Medical examination

All asylum seekers are offered *one* medical examination. This is optional and free of charge. The health centre invites all new asylum seekers to a medical examination. If you do not receive any notice within two months, you can contact the nearest health centre to ask for one.

All health and dental care is carried out confidentially. The medical staff must not tell anyone about what they have learned about a patient. The county council will not provide information to the Migration Board about individual patients, unless the patient gives his or her consent.

Interpreter

When you contact or visit a health centre you are entitled to an interpreter. This is free and the interpreter has a professional duty to observe secrecy. The interpreter is impartial and will *only* translate what you and the health staff say.

Contacts with health services

It is not always necessary to see a doctor during a visit to a health centre. Nurses can provide advice and treatment. They have received extensive training and know a lot about diseases. The nurse can also prescribe certain drugs.

Before the visit to a centre, you must call and make an appointment. You cannot see a nurse or doctor without an appointment. The best way to book an appointment is via telephone. Most health centres have specific telephone hours when staff have time to answer the phone. If you live close to a centre, you can go there to book an appointment. If you have booked a time, and then are late or do not turn up, you might have to pay for the visit anyway.

Medicine

You can buy medicines from the pharmacy and pay yourself. If you have a prescription from a doctor or nurse you will not have to pay more than SEK 50 per medicine at the pharmacy. Some medicines are not available on prescription and you have to pay for them yourself. If you take a lot of medicine there is a maximum charge of SEK 400 per six months.

Please respect appointment times

As an asylum seeker, you are entitled to emergency health care. This applies if you become seriously ill or injured and it cannot wait. In other situations you should contact the health centre for advice via telephone. If you cannot make a telephone call, go to the health centre when it is open and ask at reception.

You must be sure to organize your trip to the health centre so that you arrive on time.

To call an ambulance in the event of a serious accident or emergency illness, call 112.

Health care advice telephone line/1177

The health care telephone advice line is open 24 hours a day. The number is 1177. Staff answering your call can tell you which is the right place to go to, if you need care when the clinic is closed.

They have a lot of information about illnesses and health. If you have Internet access, you can read more in different languages here: <http://1177.se/Varmland/Other-languages/>

Costs

To see a doctor or nurse, you must pay a patient fee. If you receive a lot of medical care there is a maximum charge of SEK 400 per six months. Hospitals and medical centres do not handle cash, so you may receive an invoice sent to your home after your visit. You can pay the invoice at the bank, or online. If you do not have the money then you should contact your administrator at the Swedish Migration Board.

Transport

You should always bring your Asylum Seeker (LMA) card or receipt for your asylum application. You should *only* call an ambulance when it is a serious emergency.

At all other times, you should use normal means of transport, such as bus or train. If you do not receive a bus or train ticket together with the letter notifying you of your medical examination, then you must pay your travel expenses yourself. Save all of the receipts and tickets from your journey. You must show these receipts and tickets to the health centre's staff, who will testify with their signature that you have visited the centre. To receive travel expenses for amounts in excess of SEK 25, which is the most you will pay for a health care trip by bus or train, you must send the receipts and/or tickets with the signatures of health care staff by mail to the address below. The minimum payout is SEK 50.

Address: Sjukresor i Värmland, Centralsjukhuset, 651 85 Karlstad, Sweden.

You should travel by taxi only in *exceptional cases* (e.g. childbirth). You can order a taxi via the following telephone number: 0771-32 32 00. If you have to travel by taxi for medical reasons, you must get a certificate from the health care centre. When you have this certificate as an asylum seeker you will only have to pay SEK 40 for a single taxi trip. If you do not have the correct certificate for a taxi journey you may be liable to pay for the trip yourself.

Help for less serious health problems

Self-care is nothing new. We humans have always tried to cure ourselves. Swedish law states that each individual has the ultimate responsibility for his or her own health. Meeting this responsibility can be difficult, of course, if you do not know what to do.

Self-care means that you yourself can recognize and treat mild disease symptoms. It also means knowing your limitations and knowing where to turn when you need professional help.

Cold

What is commonly called a cold is almost always caused by a virus. The symptoms are runny nose, dry cough, muscle aches, and throat problems. The same virus sometimes causes irritation to the eyes. The symptoms are short-lived and often disappear within 4-5 days.

Sore throat

A sore throat may be due to a virus or bacterial infection. If you have moderate throat discomfort for 1-2 days and also have a cold, you probably have a viral infection. Penicillin or other antibiotics will not help this. If you are in a lot of discomfort, you can buy medicine without a prescription (available from the pharmacy).

Cough

Coughing is the body's natural reaction when airways are irritated. Coughing is a reflex protection and should not be suppressed unnecessarily. If the cough becomes dry and more troublesome, you might need medication, especially at night.

Headache

Headache is a general term for pain in the head. Normal, occasional headaches often occur when you have a high temperature in connection with a common cold and flu.

Headaches that recur regularly and feel like a pressure on the forehead, neck and shoulders can be caused by muscle tension and are called tension headaches.

Headaches can also occur if you use painkillers too frequently. It is important to eat properly, especially breakfast. Do not neglect your sleep.

If you have a temporary headache, for example in connection with infection, you can use prescription painkillers from the pharmacy.

Back and neck pain

Sudden pain and stiffness in the lower back or lumbar region is known as lumbago. Sciatica pain involves pain pulsating into the hip and legs, sometimes into the foot. Back pain usually passes after a day of resting in bed. During the acutely painful period you should rest in a pain-free position and avoid any movement that hurts. Do not overload your back by carrying or lifting.

Torticollis is a painful locking of the neck muscles. It can be caused by, for example, unusual movement of the head, an improper sleeping position or a draft. Neck pain or stiff neck can be relieved by heat and massage. Torticollis usually goes over after a few days.

Pain in the back and neck pain can be alleviated with painkillers from the pharmacy that are available without a prescription.

Anxiety and worry

Anxiety and worry involve feelings of excessive and indeterminate uneasiness. They can also involve direct physical symptoms such as palpitations, sweating, tightness of the chest, head or stomach and a feeling of breathlessness.

If your life involves a lot of stress, it is normal to feel anxiety and worry. It is important to have someone to talk to, who will listen and understand and give support during the most difficult time.

If you have such severe anxiety that you cannot manage your life, contact the health centre.

Sleeping problems

Sleep problems can occur if you get too little sleep. You might find it difficult to sleep at night, difficult to fall back to sleep when you wake up at night or you might wake up too early in the morning.

People need different amounts of sleep and there is no normal need for sleep. Some good advice to help you sleep is to keep the bedroom cool and have the window open before going to bed. Dark curtains and earplugs are good if you are sensitive to light and sound.

Eating late at night makes it harder to fall asleep and disturbs your sleep. Avoid food in the evening that freshens you up, such as coffee, strong tea or alcohol. It is important to drink water. Being outdoors and exercising during the day can improve sleep.

Food and health

Good eating habits are important for health. If your family has a history of, for example, high blood pressure, diabetes or being overweight, you should give priority to diet and exercise. Today, we eat large amounts of sweets and soft drinks, which make it more difficult to maintain a normal weight. It is important to eat fruit and vegetables.

It is also important to move around. Regular exercise, such as daily walking, is one of the keys to preventing disease, improving sleep and maintaining good health.

By reducing smoking or stopping altogether, the risk of serious diseases like heart attacks, bronchitis, lung disease and lung cancer decreases significantly. Stopping smoking also makes your dental health better.

Dental care for asylum seekers

Free dental care for children under age 20

Asylum-seeking children and young people receive free dental care up to the age of 20. They have the same right to dental care as Swedish children. You should always bring your Asylum Seeker (LMA) card or receipt for your asylum application if you have not yet received your card.

Adults over 20 pay SEK 50

If you are an asylum seeker over the age of 20 you are only entitled to emergency dental care. This means severe toothache, for example. You should always bring your Asylum Seeker (LMA) card or receipt for your asylum application. Each visit to the dentist costs SEK 50.

Make an appointment first

In order to meet the dental staff, you must make an appointment in advance. Either call your nearest public dental clinic or visit the clinic and ask for an appointment. You will be given a time when you can meet the dental staff. Write down the time and make sure you are not late, otherwise we cannot help you.

Travel to the dental centre

Travel by bus or train. You can pay with the credit card you received from the Migration Board. Save the receipt or ticket from the trip. Show this receipt or ticket to the dental staff, and they will sign it to certify that you have been there. You are welcome to send in your receipt and apply for reimbursement for the trip, by mail to: Sjukresor i Värmland, Centralsjukhuset, 651 85 Karlstad.

Interpreter

When you visit or contact the dental centre, you are entitled to an interpreter free of charge. The interpreter is impartial, must maintain confidentiality and will only translate what you and the dental staff say.