

What affordable health services can I access?

Access to affordable and timely health care is a major issue for many women experiencing or having experienced domestic violence.

If you are worried about this and are living on a tight budget, there are ways to access low cost or free health services in Canberra. Using these services can help ease your budget worries whilst improving your health and wellbeing. Some of these services have a lot of experience working with women and children who have experienced domestic violence.

Free healthcare

The ACT is home to a number of free and low cost health services. Below is a list of the main services which may be able to help you and your children. Services will also be able to refer you to other services and specialists to suit your needs.

ACT Women's Health Service

The ACT Women's Health service is run by women for women. This is a free service which sees women who have significant difficulty in accessing health services. They have experience with and understand some of the difficulties you may be facing at this time and give priority to women in your position, because they regularly treat women who have experienced domestic violence; and who are financially disadvantaged. They offer nursing, medical and counselling appointments, and will give you short term medical support including and help you find a regular GP that suits your needs.

The Women's Health Service is centrally located in Civic at Level 1, 1 Moore Street. Outreach counselling and women's health clinics are also provided in Gungahlin, Belconnen, Phillip, and Tuggeranong.

Civic opening hours: 8:30am – 4:45pm Monday to Friday

(Closed public holidays and between Christmas and the first working day in the New Year.)

Phone: (02) 6205 1078

Canberra Hospital - Walk in Centre

The Walk-in Centres in Belconnen and Tuggeranong provide an alternative for fast access to free health advice and one-off treatment for minor illnesses and

injuries.give free one-off medical advice and treatment for people with minor illness and injury. You can just drop in because you do not need to have an appointment.

Opening hours: 7.30am to 10pm daily every day of the year, including Christmas Day and New Year's Day

Addresses: **Belconnen Walk-in Centre**
Belconnen Community Health Centre,
cnr Lathlain and Cohen Streets, Belconnen

Tuggeranong Walk-in Centre
Tuggeranong Community Health Centre
Cnr Anketell And Pitman Streets, Tuggeranong

Website <http://health.act.gov.au/walk-in-centre/home/>

Bulk Billing doctors

Bulk billing is when a doctor bills Medicare directly for the full payment for their service. Bulk billing means you should not be charged any additional costs such as a booking or administration fee.

A patient account is when a doctor charges you directly in full. After you have paid you can then claim a portion of this cost with Medicare.

So to save money, look for doctors in your area who may bulk bill.

Things to remember:

- If you are running late or cannot make an appointment call the service.
- Always bring your Medicare card and Centrelink Concession cards
- Whenever and wherever you go to see a doctor or other health care professional always bring your Medicare Card and any Centrelink Concession card you hold. By showing these cards you may be able to get free or significant discounts on health services.
- When you make an appointment with any health care service always ask:
 - How much will it cost? How much of a co-payment will I have to pay?
 - Do you bulk bill and who do you do this for? Some health services only bulk bill for concession card holders, like seniors.
 - What Centrelink Concession card do I need for a discount?
 - If my appointment is longer, will I be charged more?
- If you have moved house **remember to get any correspondence from the healthcare provider sent to your new address.**

ACT Community Health Intake

Community Health Intake is a central access point for advice and referral to a range of specialist and rehabilitative services, like physiotherapy, maternity care and chronic disease management. Many of the services available through this have eligibility criteria and will require a referral from a GP.

For more information phone:

Phone: 6207 9977

8am-5pm, Monday to Friday

Canberra Sexual Health Centre

The Canberra Sexual Health Centre is a free service that offers testing for and treatment of sexually transmissible infections. They are a specialist clinic, which seek to provide confidential and high quality professional and non-judgemental care. They provide access to the latest information, advice and treatments.

Opening hours: Walk-in (no appointment needed)

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday Mornings

9:00am - 2:00pm

Wednesday Afternoons

1.30pm - 3.30pm

Limited pre-booked appointments for general sexual health care are available Monday, Tuesday and Thursday afternoons.

Phone: (02) 6244 2184

Address: Building 5 (North Wing)
Canberra Hospital, Garran ACT

Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service

Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service (AHS) is a free primary health service run by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. To access this service you will need to be an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person. They provide medical services like women and children specific services, immunisations, health checks and dental.

Opening hours: 9am – 4:30pm Monday to Friday
Address: 63 Boolimba Crescent
Narrabundah ACT 2604
Phone: (02) 6284 6222

Health Directorate Alcohol and Other Drugs Services

The Health Directorate gives information, advice, referral, intake, assessment and support twenty-four hours a day. They help individuals and their family and friends with drug and alcohol problems.

Phone: 24 Hour Helpline (02) 6207 9977
Address: Building 7, Palmer Street, The Canberra Hospital
Level 1, 1 Moore Street, Canberra City

Low cost health services

National Health Coop/ West Belconnen Health Cooperative Ltd

The West Belconnen Health Cooperative Ltd provides affordable and accessible medical and health services to the Canberra community.

You can become a member by paying a low annual membership fee. As a member you will receive benefits such as bulk billing where possible. It is a not-for-profit organisation which means that your membership fees go into supporting the Cooperative.

For more information contact the following Cooperative centres:

National Health Co-op Charnwood

Opening hours: 8:30am – 5:00pm
Monday to Friday
9am -1pm
Saturday
Address: 20 Cartwright St Charnwood ACT 2615
Phone: (02) 6178 0400 or (02) 6178 0401
Email: reception@westbelconnenhealth.coop

National Health Co-op Belconnen

Opening hours: 8:30am – 5:00pm

Monday to Friday

Address: 1/30 Totterdell Street, Belconnen ACT 2616

Phone: (02) 6178 0417 or (02) 6178 0418

Email: reception@westbelconnenhealth.coop

National Health Co-op Kippax

Opening hours: 8:30am – 5:00pm

Monday to Friday

Address: Kippax Fair Shopping Centre (Inside mall opposite The Coffee Club)

Hardwick Crescent

Holt, ACT 2615

Phone: (02) 6178 0431 or (02) 6178 0432

Email: reception@westbelconnenhealth.coop

National Health Co-op Evatt

Opening hours: 8:30am – 5:00pm

Monday to Friday

Address: 8 McClure Place

Evatt, ACT 2617

Phone: (02) 6178 0447

Email: reception@westbelconnenhealth.coop

National Health Co-op Chisholm

Opening hours: 8:30am – 5:00pm

Monday to Friday

9am -1pm

Saturday

Address: 26 Benham Street

Chisholm, ACT 2905

Phone: (02) 6162 0058

Email: reception@westbelconnenhealth.coop

Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT (SHFPACT)

SHFPACT offers free or low cost sexual or reproductive health care. They provide pap smears, STIs checks and contraception and fertility advice. All doctors and nurses are female.

You will need to make an appointment.

Opening Hours: 9am – 5pm Monday – Thursday

9am – 4pm Friday

Some after-hours appointments are available –ask when you make your booking.

Phone: (02) 6247 3077

SMS only: 0400 770 999

Email: shfpact@shfpact.org.au

Address: 1/28 University Ave

Canberra ACT 2601

Community Health's Adult Dental Service

Community Health's Adult Dental Service provides dental treatment to ACT residents who are the primary holder of a current ACT Centrelink issued Pension Concession or Healthcare card. Services are delivered from the Civic and Phillip Health Centres.

There is a maximum co-payment of \$300 for restorative treatment in a year. This payment excludes certain procedures and products. Please call the clinic for more details. Payments can be made in cash, Eftpos, credit card, cheque or Centrepay.

Opening Hours: 8:30am – 5pm Monday to Friday (check for periodic closures on Wednesday afternoons.)

Address: Moore St Health Building
Corner Moore & Alinga Streets, Civic

Phone: (02) 6205 0978 or (02) 6205 0977

Address: Phillip Health Centre
Corner Corinna & Keltie Streets

Phone: (02) 6205 1463 or (02) 6205 1695

Emergency Dental Services

Emergency dental services are available to eligible adults and children who need urgent dental treatment.

To go to this service you need to be an ACT resident and Centrelink Concession card holder.

There is a minimum charge for this service for adults. Additional fees may apply and can be paid in cash, Eftpos, credit card or cheque. This service is free for children under 18 who hold a Centrelink Concession Card.

Be sure to bring your current ACT Centrelink Concession Card and details of any medication you are currently taking.

Always phone ahead to check availability, to be assessed and to make an appointment. It is also a good idea to ask about fees at this time.

Opening Hours: Monday – Friday (except public holidays)

Phone: (02) 6205 1653

Phone Support

If you need someone to talk to or you would like advice on where to get help, there are phone numbers you can call.

Be aware that even though some services are free to call there may be extra costs for you if you are calling them from a mobile phone.

1800 RESPECT: National Sexual Assault, Domestic and Family Violence Counselling Service for people living in Australia

1800 RESPECT has qualified and experienced counsellors who can provide you with information and referral to support services that can help you and your family.

For Information and support 24/7 - Call 1800 737 732

HealthDirect Australia

If you have a health issue and you do not know what to do you can speak with a registered nurse over the phone. The nurse will be able to help you to know where to go and what to do.

Phone: 1800 022 222 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

Calls from landlines are free. Calls from a mobile phone may be charged.

Lifeline

Lifeline offers confidential telephone crisis support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from a landline, payphone or mobile.

If you are experiencing a personal crisis or thinking about suicide you can call Lifeline. Trained volunteer staff are ready to listen, provide support and referral to anyone, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation.

Phone: 13 11 14

Most calls to 13 11 14 from a landline will be charged the cost of a local call, however additional charges may apply for some home phone plans.

Calls to 13 11 14 from mobiles are free. This includes Pre-Paid and Post-Paid customers.

Pre-paid customers who are out-of-credit will be connected to 13 11 14 until their prepaid service is suspended. The out-of-credit period varies depending on providers but is typically between 30 days and 6 months.

Reducing the costs of your Private Health Insurance

If you have private health insurance you might be worried about keeping up with payments. If you are doing it tough financially and/or your circumstances have changed you might want to think about:

- Reassessing whether your current plan meets your needs. The Australian Private Health Ombudsman has a tool to help you compare policies which you can access here: <http://www.privatehealth.gov.au/dynamic/compare.aspx>.
- Lowering your premiums. This means choosing to receive only limited benefits, not be covered for certain services or co-paying for certain treatments.
- Any discounts you may be able to get from your provider. For example, if you are a pensioner or a low income earner in the ACT your premium may be reduced because you are entitled to free ambulance cover.
- Requesting a suspension due to financial hardship. Health funds may allow you to suspend your insurance for an agreed amount of time.
- Talking with your health fund about your situation and what options they can offer to help you.

Reducing your Chemist/Pharmacy costs

Filling your prescription can be expensive. To cut some of the costs try to:

- Use your Centrelink Healthcare concession card at all times
- If a medication is covered under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) you will only pay \$5.90 per script. If a medication is not on the PBS you will be charged the full price.
- Agree to or ask for the generic brand of medication
- Fill your prescription at a discount pharmacy
- If you are in crisis, talk with an emergency support provider. In special circumstances some charities and community organisations may pay for your prescription to be filled.

- Buy at the supermarket. It is cheaper to buy over the counter medications, first aid supplies and feminine hygiene products from the supermarket rather than the pharmacy. Products like paracetamol, antacids, bandaids and tampons will be cheaper at the supermarket.

Unexpected medical costs

Healthcare or medical debts often happen because of unexpected illness or emergency. Big bills like ambulance fees or operations and treatment are daunting.

- If you know you're going to have any kind of surgery or medical treatment always ask for an estimate of costs and a payment plan before agreeing to the treatment if you can.
- Remember if you have a Centrelink Healthcare card medical treatment may be heavily discounted and your debt minimised or cleared.