

# What affordable health services can I access?

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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, nutrition and counselling appointments, and will give you short term medical support 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, West Belconnen, Belconnen, Phillip, and Tuggeranong.

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

Phone: (02) 5124 1787

Website: <https://www.health.act.gov.au/services-and-programs/women-youth-and-children/womens-health/womens-health-service>

### Walk in Centres

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

All Walk-in Centres are led by a team of highly skilled advanced practice nurses and nurse practitioners with extensive experience in treating people with minor injuries and illnesses. There are no doctors at the clinics.

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

Phone: 02 5124 8080

They are located at the Community Health Centres in Belconnen, Dickson, Gungahlin, Tuggeranong, and Weston Creek.

**If you have complex health conditions or children under 2 years, please visit your GP for advice.**

Website <https://www.health.act.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-centres/walk-centres>

### **Healthdirect**

If you need to speak with a registered nurse, you can call Healthdirect at any time for advice on 1800 022 222. Healthdirect is a 24/7 service.

### **Bulk Billing doctors**

Bulk billing is when a doctor bills Medicare directly for the full payment of 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.
- 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 to a new house **remember to get any correspondence from the healthcare provider sent to your new address.**

### **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 – 5pm Monday to Friday

Address: 63 Boolimba Crescent  
Narrabundah ACT 2604

Phone: (02) 6284 6222

### **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 Coombs**

Opening hours: 8:30am – 5:00pm

Monday to Friday

Address: 110 Woodberry Ave  
Coombs, ACT 2611

Phone: (02) 6178 0400

Website: <https://www.nhc.coop/locations/coombs>

#### **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 0400  
Website: <https://www.nhc.coop/locations/belconnen>

**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 0400

Website: <https://www.nhc.coop/locations/kippax>

**National Health Co-op Evatt**

Opening hours: 8:30am – 5:00pm

Monday to Friday

Address: 8 McClure Place  
Evatt, ACT 2617

Phone: (02) 6178 0400

Website: <https://www.nhc.coop/locations/evatt>

**National Health Co-op Chisholm**

Opening hours: 8:30am – 5:00pm

Monday to Friday

9am -2pm

Saturday

Address: 26 Benham Street  
Chisholm, ACT 2905

Phone: (02) 6178 0400

Website: <https://www.nhc.coop/locations/chisholm>

**National Health Co-op Macquarie**

Opening hours: 8:30am – 5:00pm

Monday to Friday

Address: Shops 4 & 5 Macquarie Place  
Macquarie, ACT 2614

Phone: (02) 6178 0400  
Website: <https://www.nhc.coop/locations/macquarie>

### **National Health Co-op ANU**

Opening hours: 8:30am – 5:00pm  
Monday to Friday  
9am -2pm  
Saturday

Address: L2, Building 156, Joplin Lane  
Acton, ACT 2601

Phone: (02) 6178 0400  
Website: <https://www.nhc.coop/locations/anu>

### **Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT (SHFPACT)**

SHFPACT offers free or low cost sexual or reproductive health care. They provide pap smears/cervical screening, STI checks and contraception and fertility advice. The majority of doctors and nurses are women.

You will need to make an appointment.

Opening Hours: Monday – closed  
Tuesday – Thursday – 8:30am – 5pm  
Friday – 8:30pm – 1:30pm  
Some after-hours appointments are available –ask when you make your booking.

Phone: (02) 6247 3077  
SMS only: 0400 770 999  
Website: <https://www.shfpact.org.au>  
Address: Level 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.

Phone: (02) 5124 9977 Central Health Intake for all clinics

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

#### **City Community Health Centre**

Address: 1 Moore Street  
Canberra, ACT 2601

#### **Phillip Community Health Centre**

Address: 17 Corrina Street  
Phillip, ACT 2606

#### **Tuggeranong Community Health Centre**

Address: Anketell Street & Pitman Street  
Tuggeranong, ACT 2900

#### **Gungahlin Community Health Centre**

Address: 57 Earnest Cavanagh Street  
Gungahlin, ACT 2912

#### **Belconnen Community Health Centre**

Address: 56 Lathlain Street  
Belconnen, ACT 2617

#### **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. 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) 5124 9977 Central Health Intake

Limited after-hours services are also available at the Phillip Dental Clinic on Saturday mornings. Please contact 02 6205 1653 for weekend and public holiday emergency care.

## **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: <https://www.privatehealth.gov.au/dynamic/search/start>
- 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 \$6.60 per script if you have a concession card, or up to \$41 per script if you do not have a concession card. 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 menstrual 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.