

Information for blind and low vision people in healthcare — large print

Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora is committed to improving health outcomes for Deaf and disabled people. We make sure health services are inclusive, equitable and accessible. This commitment is guided by the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act 2022 and the New Zealand Disability Strategy 2025.

Our vision is a health system where Deaf and disabled people and their whānau (family) experience ordinary health outcomes, accessible and inclusive healthcare, and have their rights upheld in every interaction.

Your rights

When accessing health services you have the right to:

- be treated with respect and dignity
- be fully informed and make informed decisions
- have a support person with you

- speak up if something is not right.

These rights are supported by the:

- Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Emergency and after hours care

If you need urgent care and have accessibility needs, tell staff immediately so they can provide appropriate support during emergencies or evacuations.

Prepare for your healthcare appointment or hospital stay

Healthcare appointments are often short, so planning ahead helps you get the most out of your time.

Before you go

- Write down your symptoms and any other concerns.
- Make a list of questions you want to ask.
- Bring a support person if you want.
- Bring your Health Passport — you can download this online:

<https://www.hdc.org.nz/disability/my-health-passport/>

- Bring medications and information about allergies or medical history.
- Tell staff about your support needs early, for example, interpreters, communication support.
- Ask for information in a format you understand (Easy Read, large print, read aloud).

During your appointment or stay

- Be honest, even if it feels embarrassing.
- Ask for a recap at the end. It is okay to ask for written notes.
- If you have concerns, speak to the care team or the manager of the area.

If you are admitted to hospital

- Ask staff to write on the whiteboard above your bed that you are blind or have low vision. This helps staff know how to support you, such as telling you that food has arrived and what you have to eat.
- Bring anything you need to make your stay easier.
- Staff may not have worked with blind or low vision people before. Tell them what works best for you.
- You will meet many staff. Keep your notes handy.
- If you are well enough, get dressed and out of bed early in your stay. Moving helps recovery and prevents problems like stiffness or infections.
- Ask staff for help if you need support to move safely.

Why moving early helps

Getting up and moving as soon as you are well enough can:

- improve breathing and circulation

- lower the risk of blood clots and chest infections
- help your muscles stay strong and prevent stiffness
- support independence and make going home easier.

Leaving hospital

It is important for your recovery that your discharge happens quickly when you no longer need hospital care.

You will be given a discharge letter, summary or form describing:

- your stay in hospital
- your recent illness
- treatment or surgery you had
- follow-up care at home
- treatment you may still need.

This is important so ask questions about this before you leave and read it again when you get home.

Your nurse can discuss this you, your whānau or carer.

Now is another chance to ask any questions about:

- what happened in hospital

- what to expect after going home
- how to take your medicines
- how to perform self care tasks.

You may also get a prescription for medicines you need to collect. Sometimes, a prescription is for 'hospital only' medicines — you will need collect these from the hospital pharmacy. Take all belongings and prescriptions home.

Accessibility support

- NZSL interpreters are available for healthcare appointments on request.
- Language translators can be arranged if English is not your first language.
- Some hospitals support the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Lanyard initiative.
- Facilities include mobility parking, wheelchair access, and accessible toilets. Ask staff if you require assistive equipment.

For blind and low vision people

- Bring your assistive devices, such as magnifiers and screen readers.
- Ask staff to describe what they are doing during procedures.
- Ask about help to get around the hospital.
- Tell staff about any cultural needs early.
- You can give feedback by phone, email or audio.

Cultural safety

Health NZ respects the cultural needs of all disabled people.

- Tāngata whaikaha Māori and their whānau can ask for care that supports tikanga and cultural practices.
- Tell staff about any cultural needs early so they can support you.
- You can ask for a person from the Māori health team, if available in your area.

Patient portals

Many GPs use online portals where you can:

- view appointment notes and prescriptions
- access your health records and immunisation records
- book appointments and order repeat prescriptions.

Ask your GP how to sign up.

Services and support

Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People provides supports and resources for disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori, carers and whānau.

<https://www.whaikaha.govt.nz/resources/support-and-services>

Useful contacts

- Health & Disability Commissioner
<https://www.hdc.org.nz>
- Health and Disability Advocacy Service
<https://www.advocacy.org.nz>

- Whaikaha | Ministry of Disabled People

<https://www.whaikaha.govt.nz>

Contact Health NZ for disability related questions:

Email: disability@tewhatauora.govt.nz

Phone: 0800 DISABILITY (0800 347 2245489)

Give feedback or make a complaint

Give feedback on the Health New Zealand website.

<https://info.health.nz/contact-us#feedback-about-our-hospitals-and-services-14585>