



Healthcare

Who is Responsible for Our Health?

- Our healthcare system is responsible for advising the public on healthy living, treatments and preventative measures. It should also provide necessary medical care and monitor the health of children and expecting mothers.
- However, each adult is responsible for adhering to the advice and recommendation of health authorities.
- Our lifestyle greatly impacts our health and quality of life.
- It is easy to access health-related content online. It is advisable to seek out official government websites and content created by experts, such as at www.heilsuvera.is and www.doktor.is



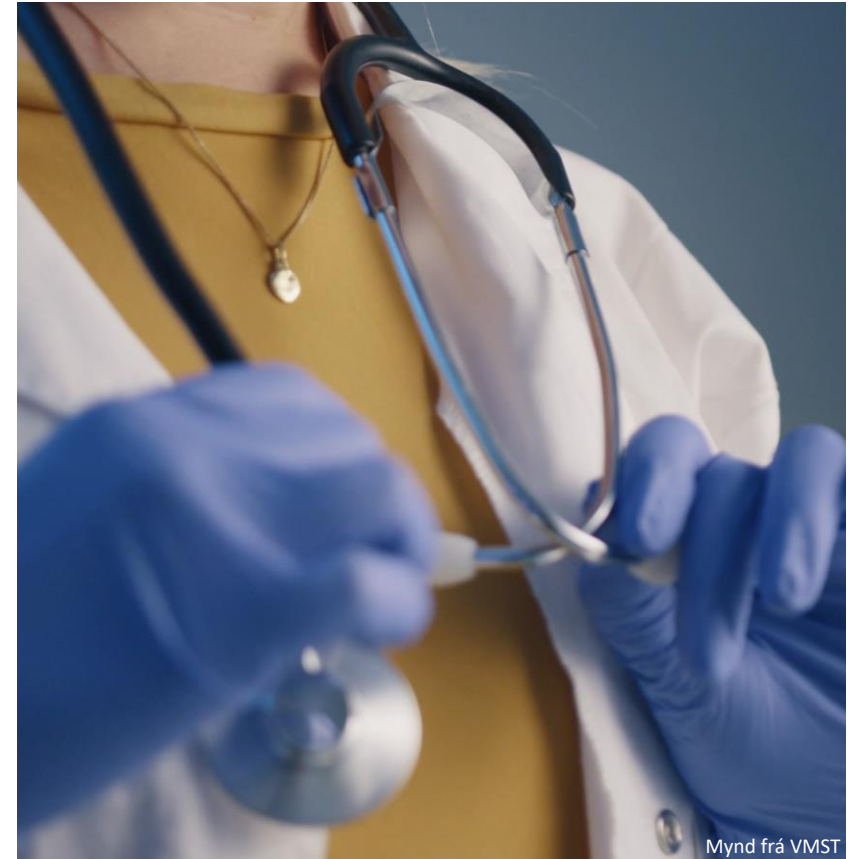
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Responsibility for Health - Continued

- In societies where serious diseases and poverty remain a part of daily life, good health can mean the absence of illness.
- Wherever pharmaceuticals and medical treatment is generally available, many believe that living a good and fulfilling life is what constitutes good health.
- In Iceland, the patient and the physician will often discuss different lines of therapy and the patient has a right to all information pertaining to their medical condition.
- People are not always given a prescription when they go and meet with a physician. Sometimes, other solutions are explored first, such as lifestyle changes.

The Welfare State and Healthcare

- In a welfare state, the government's aim is for all its citizens to live the best life possible, including a healthy life.
- The state is responsible for providing citizens with the necessary healthcare without regard to their financial situation.
- Taxes on salaries and economic activity are used, among other things, to fund the healthcare system.
- Individuals will also share in the cost and pay for interviews, checkups, and examinations. However, there is a price ceiling for the monthly copayment of everyone.



Obligation of Confidentiality

- Everyone in the healthcare sector is legally obligated to maintain full confidentiality regarding patients' medical information. This means that no one is permitted to share patient information with a 3rd party without the patient's permission.
- Therefore, the conversations patients have with physicians, nurses, and other healthcare professionals remain confidential.
- Interpreters are also bound by confidentiality concerning the cases they take on as interpreters. (It is reasonable to request confirmation of confidentiality from interpreters).

Life Expectancy

- The people of Iceland generally enjoy a high quality of life. In general, everyone has equal access to healthcare services.
- There are healthcare centers throughout the whole country. Children and adults have access to a wide range of services.
- Landspítalinn University Hospital is a technologically advanced hospital where serious injuries and illnesses are treated.
- Healthcare for mothers and infants is robust and free of charge, and Iceland's infant mortality rate is the lowest in Europe.
- Men's average life expectancy is 81 years and women's life expectancy is 84 years.

Healthcare Centers

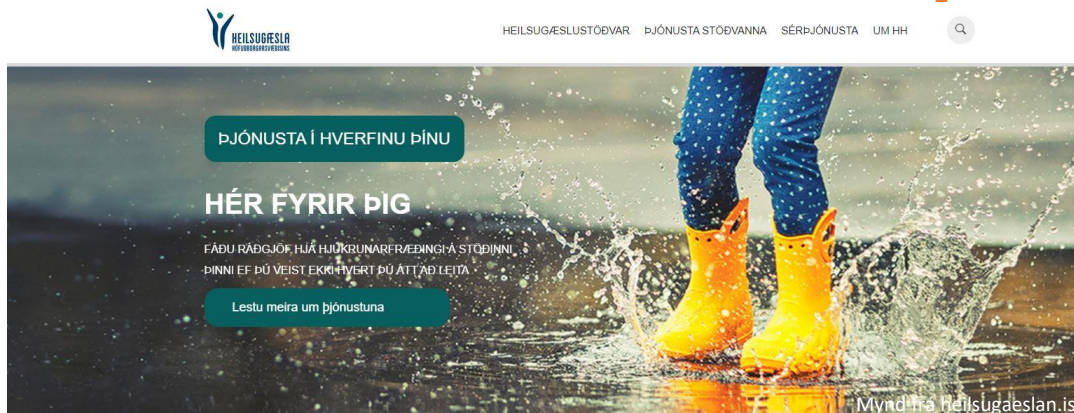
- All citizens have the right to be registered with a healthcare center in their area and are allocated a regular general practitioner.
- Healthcare centers can be accessed by displaying an ID and registering on site or by registering online at www.sjukra.is through "Réttindagátt – mínar síður" (Rights' Portal - My Pages).
- You can change who your general practitioner is.
- The Healthcare centers have standard fees, but the amounts vary according to the Icelandic Health Insurance's copayment system.



Healthcare Centers - Continued

- The healthcare centers should always be the first stop for people who are experiencing illness or pain. The general practitioner will refer people to a specialist as necessary.
- The healthcare centers offer a range of services:
 - Healthcare services; interviews, checkups, phone interviews.
 - Phone consultation with nurses.
 - Walk-ins for acute illnesses or minor injuries.
 - Prenatal care.
 - Infant and childcare.
 - Vaccinations.

Healthcare - Continued



- Cont. - Services at health clinics:
 - Prescriptions, doctor's certificates, referrals.
 - Cancer screenings for men and women.
 - Psychological services
 - Healthcare for school children.
 - Elderly care.
 - Courses and education on breastfeeding, parenting, and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle.
- See, for example, the healthcare web portal for the Greater Reykjavík Area at www.heilsugaeslan.is

Healthcare - Booking Appointments and Walk-Ins

- It is necessary to make an appointment with a general practitioner. Either by phone or by booking it on www.heilsuvera.is
- If someone requires an interpreter, **then they are required to inform staff of this when the appointment is made** and indicate which language is required for interpretation. Staff at the healthcare center will then book an interpreter.
- It is also possible to book phone interviews with physicians.
- Many healthcare centers will offer the possibility of walk-ins during the afternoon shift.
- It is also possible to make the appointment on the day of arrival or to turn up and take a number - it varies from clinic to clinic.

How Much Does it Cost?

- The health clinics offer services free of charge for children.
- Prenatal care as well as infant and childcare is also free of charge.
- There is no patient fee for children, disabled people, or senior citizens, but others are required to share in the cost.
- Doctor's certificates must be paid for.
- The Icelandic Health Insurance operates based on public copay regulations for healthcare services. There is a pay ceiling for an individual's monthly copay.



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www.heilsuvera.is

- The website www.heilsuvera.is is a centralised website for all the health clinics.
- There, people can access "mínar síður" (My Pages) by using electronic ID in order to:
 - Renew prescriptions and request prescription drugs.
 - Make an appointment with a physician.
 - Request a doctor's certificate and exams.
 - Request a Covid-19 sample.
 - View test findings.
- The website also has a great deal of information about child development and evidence-based parenting methods.
- It also contains information and advice on a range of healthcare topics for all ages.



Mynd frá heilsuvera.is

Right to an Interpreter

- Laws on patients' rights dictate that a patient who does not speak Icelandic, has the right to request interpreting services for information that relates to their health, prospective treatment or other possible remedies.
- The services of an interpreter must be requested when the appointment is made with a physician, nurse, or midwife.

Surveys



- Tests such as blood tests, x-rays, ultrasounds and CT-scans take place in hospitals or treatment facilities that specialise in performing such tests.
- The physician will request a test electronically and people must make their way to the testing facility on their own.
- The results are sent to the requesting physician.
- The tests will need to be paid for.

Specialists

- The hospitals employ several medical specialists, in addition to specialists in private practice.
- It is possible to request that the physician refer you to a medical specialist or make the appointment with the specialist directly.
- Examples of available medical specialists are ophthalmologists, otorhinolaryngologists, gynecologists, obstetricians, pediatricians, psychiatrists, allergists, and gastroenterologists

Læknavaktin

- Læknavaktin provides walk-in medical services for the Greater Reykjavík Area. It is open from 17:00 to 23:30 on weekdays, and from 9:00 to 23:30 on weekends.
- Læknavaktin has physicians on staff who provide healthcare services.
- It is not necessary to book an appointment, it is enough to simply turn up and take a number. A patient fee must be paid.
- Phone consultation with a nurse **is available for the whole country** between 17:00 to 08:00 on weekdays and 24 hours a day on weekends and public holidays, in 1770.
- House calls by physicians in the evenings and during weekends are requested through Læknavaktin.
- Læknavaktin is located at Háaleitisbraut 68, 103 Reykjavík. www.laeknavaktin.is
- Rural areas will often provide afternoon medical services at health clinics and critical care at the hospital for that region.



Mynd frá ja.is

Critical Care



- Critical care services for injuries and acute illnesses are located at Landspítali in Fossvogur, 108 Reykjavík. Critical care (ER) is available 24 hours a day. www.landspitali.is/sjuklingar-adstandendur/deildir-og-thjonusta/bradamottakan-i-fossvogi
- The phone number is 543 1000. Staff can also be contacted via online chat.
- This is where people with serious injuries, who have suffered violence, and people who are acutely ill should go.
- Children who are seriously injured should also be taken there.
- For example: head trauma, fractures, burns, incised wounds, and chest pain.
- Critical care for rural areas is usually provided in the hospital for that region.

Emergency Care for Victims of Sexual Abuse

- Emergency care is in the Critical Care Unit at Landspítalinn, Fossvogi. It serves both women and men. www.landspitali.is/sjuklingar-adstandendur/deildir-og-thjonusta/neydarmottaka-fyrir-tholendur-kynferdisofbeldis
- In emergency care, those who have been the victims of sexual violence (rape, attempted rape, another form of sexual assault) can seek help.
- They can receive consultation, support, medical examination and treatment.
- These services are provided free of charge to victims.
- Anonymity and full confidentiality is maintained for each case.
- Legal consultation and support in filing a complaint are available. However, the availability of services is not dependent on the victim's decision to file a complaint.

Hospitalisation

- At hospitals, all medical treatment, pharmaceuticals, stay, and meals are paid for by the state.
- Only physicians are able to decide if someone should be hospitalised.
- Landspítalinn in Reykjavík is the country's largest hospital, but other hospitals are found in larger towns outside the major metropolitan area.
- Minor surgeries are performed at both hospitals and private surgical clinics. A higher rate is paid for operations in private clinics but the waiting list is shorter.

Outpatient Care



- Patients in outpatient care will receive treatment in the hospital (or other health establishment) but will not stay there.
- People return home following treatment or consultation.
- A fee is paid for outpatient services.

Ambulance - 112



Mynd: www.ruv.is/frett/2020/06/10/nyir-sjukrabilar-verda-gulir

- The phone number **112** is the national emergency number for ambulances, the fire brigade, and the police.
- When a person contacts **112**, it is important to be able to communicate clearly:
 - You name – What your name is
 - Location – Where you are
 - The reason for the phone call – What happened
- www.112.is is also available as a website with information and online chat service. Information and consultation can be found there on subjects such as domestic violence.
- An individual who is transported by ambulance will pay a fixed fee for the transportation, regardless of distance. The invoice is sent to the individual afterwards.

Children and Healthcare Services

- Children will often get sick during the first years of their life, while their immune system is getting stronger.
- Common illnesses among infants include stomach flu, fever, the common cold, and ear infections, as well as viral and bacterial infections such as streptococcus pneumonia and chicken pox.
- Physicians will sometimes prescribe antibiotics for children and it is important to ensure that they complete the dose regimen.
- Some children will need to get ear tubes due to ear infections.
- Antipyretic suppositories or mixtures for children can be purchased at local pharmacies.

Children – Good to Know

- When children begin preschool, they will be in contact with many other children and this can sometimes lead to infections and maladies to begin with.
- A good way to avoid infections is to wash the children's hands and change their socks when they return from preschool.
- **Lice and pinworms** are a common issue among preschool and primary school children.
- It is necessary to obtain medicine from a physician (or at a pharmacy) to treat pinworms. It is also essential to wash all linens and towels, and to disinfect all surfaces.
- Pharmacies carry medicine to treat head lice. It is important to comb through the children's hair regularly with a lice comb to remove nit and avoid the lice from taking hold.



Mynd: www.frettabladid.is/kynningar/hofum-gaman-i-skolanum-an-lusarinnar/

Children and Healthcare Services - Continued

- The healthcare center is the first place to go when seeking healthcare services for children.
- It is possible to meet with a nurse and to get an appointment with a doctor following that.
- It is also possible to make an appointment directly with a doctor.
- Furthermore, the afternoon shifts at healthcare centers accept walk-ins.
- Nurses within healthcare centers provide services at primary schools. They monitor children's growth, oversee vaccinations, and educate children about health-related issues.

Pediatricians

- Pediatricians can be found at hospitals as well as private clinics.
- For example, Reykjavík has a children's clinic at Domus barnalæknar Urðahvarfi 8, 203 Kópavogi.
- Appointments can be made in advance and booked for the afternoon shift or on weekends (Phone no. 563-1010, <https://barnalaeknardomus.is/>)
- General practitioners will also make referrals for children to see pediatricians.
- The children's medical treatment facility Barnaspítali Hringsins is located at the Landspítalinn university hospital. It has an inpatient ward and a pediatric critical care unit.

Children with Disability and Children with Developmental & Behavioural Deviations

- The local healthcare center is the first place to go when children are having difficulties. There, the staff will arrive at a conclusion in consultation with the parents on whether to refer the child to specialists.
- These can be pediatricians, psychiatrists who specialize in children and adolescents, or other specialists in pediatric care.
- "Þroska- og hegðunarstöðin" is a clinic which is operated by the healthcare system (Þönglabakki 1, 109 R.) There they offer diagnosis, consultation, treatment, and training to do with developmental and behavioural deviations. A referral is necessary. www.heilsugaeslan.is/serthjonusta/throska-og-hegdunarstod
- BUGL is a psychiatric inpatient treatment center for children and adolescents with mental health issues. A referral from a physician is necessary. www.landspitali.is/sjuklingar-adstandendur/deildir-og-thjonusta/barna-og-unglingageddeild-bugl

Children with Disability and Children with Deviations - Continued

- If a developmental disability is suspected, a consultation must be booked at a healthcare center. The center will then refer the child to the State Diagnostic and Counselling Center (Greiningar og ráðgjafastöð ríkisins (GRR)). www.greining.is
- The role of GRR is to ensure that children with autism spectrum disorders or severe developmental disabilities receive the necessary diagnosis, counseling and resources to increase their opportunities and improve their quality of life.
- Children who are diagnosed with disabilities and the parents of those children are entitled to assistance from the municipality they reside in, according to laws regarding people with disabilities.
- The municipalities offer services for people with disabilities and their families.



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Children with Disability and Children with Deviations - Continued

- Parents may be eligible to receive financial support from the State Social Security Institute (Tryggingarstofnun - www.tr.is) to aid in the care of children with disabilities and help mitigate expenses relating to their care.
- The Icelandic Health Insurance (Sjúkratryggingar Íslands - www.sjukra.is) pay for medical aids and equipment, rehabilitation/training, and travel costs.
- In Icelandic society, people with disability are entitled to security, support, service and participation in society on their own terms.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

- Iceland ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2016.
- www.stjornarradid.is/media/velferdarraduneyti-media/media/acrobat-skjol/10062009SamningurUmRettindiFatladsFolks.pdf
- The convention applies to human rights and it states that people with disabilities should enjoy the same rights and opportunities as others, and that they should receive the necessary support to that end.
- **The Convention's Core Principles Include:**
 - Respect for human dignity, diversity, autonomy, and the independence of all persons.
 - A ban against any form of discrimination based on a person's disability.
 - Equal opportunity and support, such as for education, employment, family life, and independent living.
 - Accessibility for all.
 - Equality between men and women.
 - Consultation with people with disabilities.
 - Education and presentation of the convention.
 - Societal changes to enable everyone to enjoy equal opportunity.

Copayment System - Costs

- Icelandic Health Insurance (Sjúkratryggingar Íslands (SÍ)) will pay for a portion of the cost of all medical services and pharmaceuticals for those who qualify for state medical insurance. www.sjukra.is
- The SÍ copayment system requires individuals to pay up to a certain maximum amount each month for their healthcare services.
- The maximum is lower for people with disabilities, senior citizens, and children.
- Services provided at healthcare centers, hospitals, private practise, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, and psychologists (through an agreement with SÍ, for children under 18) are covered by the copayment system.



Costs - Continued

- Individuals who live outside the greater Reykjavík metropolitan area can apply for financial aid due to travel and/or accommodation costs in relation to medical treatment. This financial aid must be applied for in advance.
- Refugees enjoy the same rights as others with SÍ and the same rights to healthcare services. Recent arrivals who have acquired international protection, will be granted an exception from the general rule of a six-month waiting period for medical insurance.
- The Directorate of Immigration (Útlendingastofnun) will send the information to SÍ to register refugees into the health insurance system.

SÍ Rights' Portal – www.sjukra.is



- On the website of Icelandic Health Insurance (SÍ), www.sjukra.is you will find the SÍ Rights' Portal.
- There, people can access "Mínar síður" (My Pages) by using electronic ID.
- Through "Mínar Síður", individuals can find information regarding their rights with SÍ, receipts for medical services they have received, and their status as it relates to pharmaceutical costs and medical service fees.
- It is important to enter the correct bank information in "Mínar síður" to ensure that SÍ can reimburse any costs when necessary.

Pharmacies/Drug Stores

- At pharmacies, individuals can purchase pharmaceuticals, health-related products and cosmetics, along with many other products.
- All pharmacies have a pharmacist on staff. There, you can get advice and information on pharmaceutical and health-related products from a pharmacist.
- Most pharmaceuticals require a prescription but certain drugs are sold over the counter, such as mild pain and allergy medication, gastritis medication, and acid reflux medication.



Pharmacies - Continued

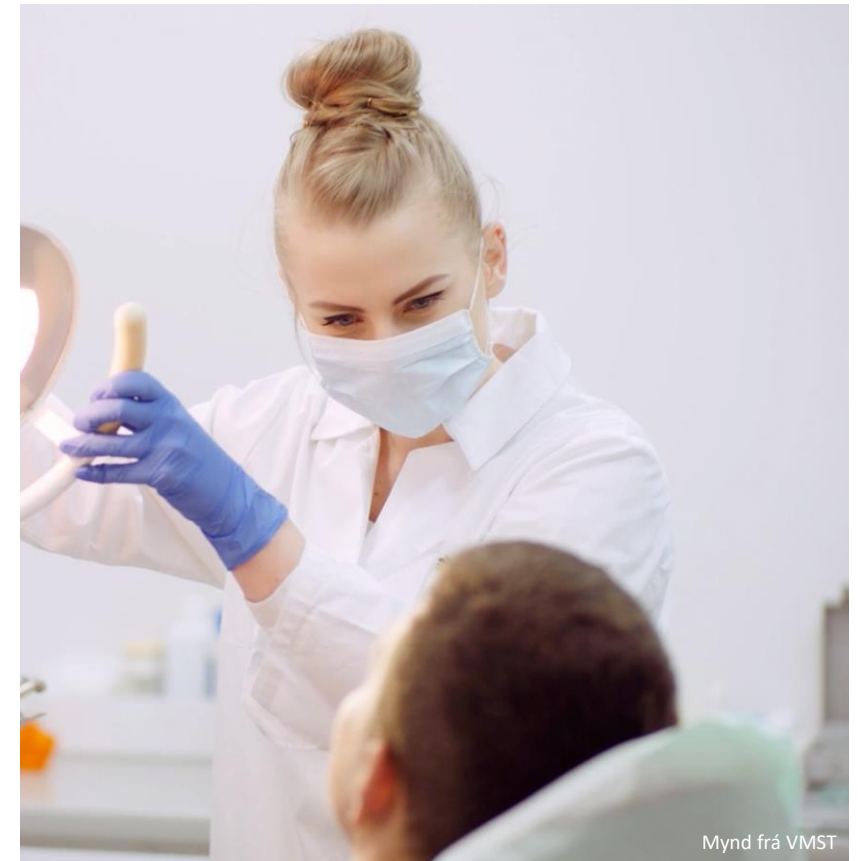
- Prescriptions are sent electronically by physicians.
- Individuals are required to provide their kennitala (identification number) at the pharmacy to obtain prescription drugs.
- Individuals are also required to carry valid identification when they purchase and retrieve prescription drugs.
- It is not permitted to retrieve prescription drugs on other people's behalf (those who are 18 and older) except with an official permission from the person named in the prescription.
- That permission can be given electronically at www.heilsuvera.is

Pharmaceutical Copayment

- The health insurance copayment for the purchasing of drugs is raised proportionally as the costs for the individual rises over a 12-month period.
- Individuals will therefore bear the highest cost the first time they purchase the drugs but subsequently that cost is lowered (within the twelve-month period).
- When people make their first purchase of a drug, a twelve-month period is initiated, for example: if the first purchase is made 15 August 2020, the period concludes on 15 August 2021.
- The period starts again once an individual purchases a drug for the first time again.

Dentists

- Dental services are free of charge for children - but not for adults.
- Discounts for senior citizens and people with a disability assessment or rehabilitation pension.
- It is good to go to a dentist for checkups and periodontal treatment once a year. Regular checkups can prevent tooth decay.
- It is therefore important to brush children's teeth daily - from the moment they start teething.
- In Iceland, tap water is clean and fresh - water should be chosen rather than fruit juice and other acidic liquids that can damage teeth.



Mynd frá VMST

Dentists - Continued

- Children's dental services are paid in full by Sjúkratryggingar Íslands except for an annual ISK 2500 visitation fee. (Parents may need to share in the cost in the case of major dental operations).
- The prerequisite for SÍ's copayment is that an individual's family dentist has been registered (through the SÍ's "Réttindagátt - Mínar síður" (www.sjukra.is) or at a dentist's office).
- The role of a family dentist is, for example, to call children in for regular checkups, to provide preventative services, and necessary dental services.
- When an individual turns 18, they are no longer entitled to free dental services.

Dentists - Continued

- Sjúkratryggingar Íslands will pay for a portion of the cost of orthodontic services.
- The services must be provided by an expert in orthodontics.
- Sí will pay for 95% of the cost if an individual has a cleft palate or a comparable condition.
- It is important to be well acquainted with the conditions and rules in this regard.

Prenatal Care and Childbirth

- Pregnant women can go in for a prenatal examination.
- Should a person not attend a prenatal examination appointment, the healthcare center will follow up with them and notify child protective services if necessary.
- Prenatal examinations are free of charge and take place at the healthcare center or in a hospital.
- The purpose of prenatal care is to aid the health of mother and child, through support and consultation, by analyzing risk factors and responding to them, as well as by offering general information about pregnancies and births.
- Midwives oversee prenatal care and they will consult the general practitioners and obstetricians at healthcare centers if necessary.
- www.heilsugaeslan.is/thjonusta-stodvanna/maedravernd/



Mynd:www.throuarmidstod.is/svid-thih/maedravernd/-36-vikur.-allar-konur/

Prenatal Care and Childbirth - Continued

- Once a pregnancy is confirmed, it is advisable to contact a midwife at a healthcare center and make an appointment for the first checkup and consultation.
- The first appointment is generally before the 12th week of the pregnancy.
- Each person will go in for prenatal care an average of 7-10 times during the pregnancy.
- The midwife is available for phone consultation between each examination.

Prenatal Care and Childbirth - Continued

- On each visit, the overall health and well-being of the expectant mother is discussed and consultation and education is provided.
- The blood pressure is measured and urine is screened for proteins.
- The fetus' heart rate is checked from the 16th week onwards.
- Screenings are available including for anemia, Hepatitis B and C, HIV and rubella.
- In a normal pregnancy, two sonograms are offered, at week 12 and week 20 of the pregnancy, at the fetal diagnosis ward at Landspítalinn university hospital.



Prenatal Care and Childbirth - Continued

- Most children in Iceland are born in hospitals and it is not necessary to pay for maternity services at the hospital.
- Home births do take place as well, although a midwife will be present during those.
- If the birth is without complications, and the mother and child are healthy, they will usually return home the same day or the following day.
- After returning home, the midwife will visit and weigh the child, assist with breastfeeding, and monitor the health of mother and child.
- These are 6-7 visits in total and the midwife may be contacted by phone if there are any complications between visits.
- Once the child is 5-7 days old, it will be taken in for a checkup with a pediatrician. A hearing exam is also performed. The checkup takes place at the children's hospital Barnaspítali Hringinsins for residents in the Greater Reykjavík Area.

Infant and Child Care



- Healthcare for infants and babies takes place at healthcare centers.
- It is available to all parents and is free of charge.
- Once a child is 6 weeks old, it will be taken for a medical examination. At month 3, the child will begin its vaccinations.
- Nurses and doctors oversee the infant and childcare.
- The aim of that care is to monitor the health and development of children from birth until they reach school age and provide parents with consultation and instructions.
- www.heilsuvera.is contains a wealth of material about childcare, and the development and health of children.

Vaccinations

- Vaccinations are vitally important and save lives.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that vaccinations save approximately 2-3 million lives every year.
- Certain diseases have been eradicated through vaccinations and whooping cough, rubella and measles are rarely seen in Iceland anymore - this is thanks to widespread participation in vaccination programs.
- Here is a list of the vaccinations children in Iceland receive.
https://assets.ctfassets.net/8k0h54kbe6bj/4dZeAPJQbGqLvgfqG8JvEV/65e8e09d2f0968cf62feca9b98f24183/Enska_14.08.2023.pdf

Terminated Pregnancy

- In Iceland, there are laws that permit the termination of a pregnancy until the end of the 22nd week. A woman has the right to abort a pregnancy if she wishes to do so.
- A pregnancy should always be aborted as soon as possible, preferably before the 12th week of the pregnancy.
- The abortion is performed in medical institutions, usually at the gynecology ward at Landspítalinn University Hospital.
- The abortion can take place in one of two ways: with the use of pharmaceuticals or surgery.

Terminated Pregnancy - Continued

- Should a person/couple choose to terminate a pregnancy then the process is as follows:
 - Confirm the pregnancy with a pregnancy test.
 - Contact the women's ward by phone at 543 3600 and leave a message which includes the following information: name, identification number, and phone number.
 - The women's ward will call back within 48 hours.
 - It is also possible to contact the healthcare center to get help requesting an abortion.
- The decision to terminate a pregnancy is not an easy one. Social workers at the women's ward at Landspítalinn support women/couples in their decision process (but do not make the decision on their behalf).
- Everyone is welcome to seek consultation with a social worker and the consultation is free of charge.
- www.landspitali.is/sjuklingar-adstandendur/deildir-og-thjonusta/kvenlaekningadeild-bradamottaka-og-gongudeild

Contraceptives



- The contraceptives available in Iceland can be divided into three categories:
 - Hormonal drugs (a contraceptive pill, contraceptive ring, contraceptive implant (placed under the skin on the arm)), patch, injection, and an intrauterine device).
 - Without hormones (condoms, copper intrauterine device, diaphragm).
 - Sterilization procedures.
- General practitioners, nurses, midwives, and gynaecologists offer consultation on contraceptive options. That consultation is confidential.
- Physicians, as well as nurses and midwives (who hold the requisite permit) can write prescriptions for contraceptives.

Emergency contraceptive pill

- If contraceptives have not been used or have failed, it is possible to get an emergency contraceptive pill ("the morning after pill") to prevent ovulation or prevent that the fertilized egg can attach itself in the uterus.
- The emergency contraceptive pill must be taken within 72 hours from sexual intercourse (the sooner the better).
- The emergency contraceptive pill can be purchased at pharmacies without a prescription.
- It is an oral tablet.

Senior Citizens

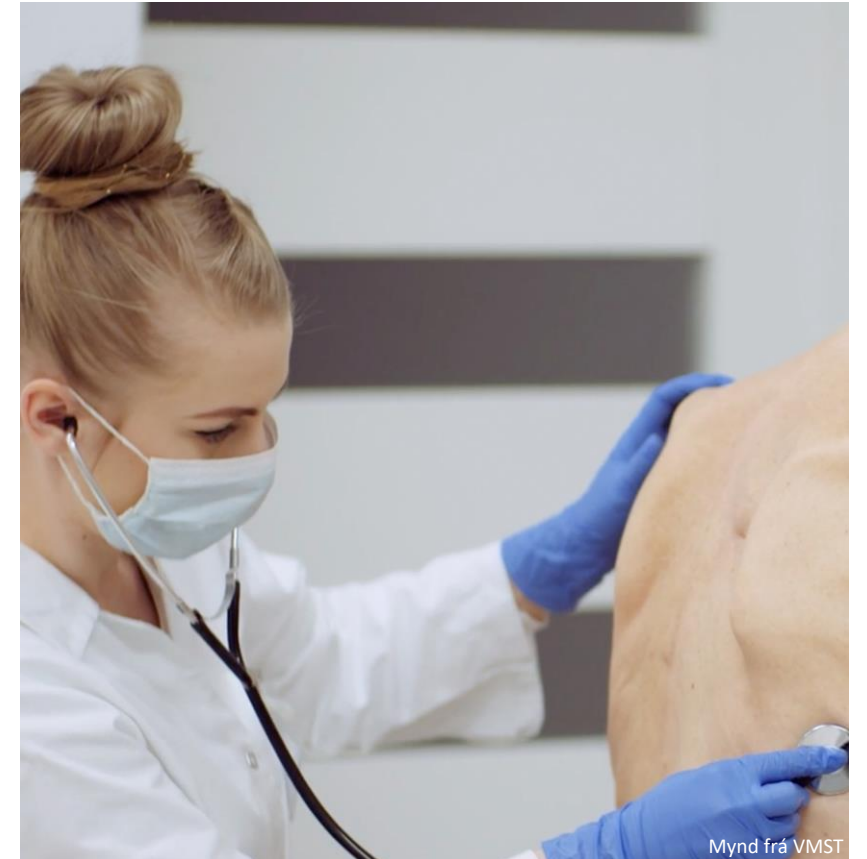
- Senior citizens in Iceland are given a pension by the state and, frequently, payments from a pension fund. The amount **depends on how long they have lived in the country and their previous income.**
- Most elderly people live in their homes as long as they can (or their entire lives).
- Many will receive support from their municipality (i.e., with cleaning, preparing meals, drug dosages, or help bathing) or they take advantage of leisure activities for senior citizens.
- People will pay for a portion of the costs themselves.



Mynd frá bing

Senior Citizens - Continued

- Nursing homes are for senior citizens who are unable to live at home. The elderly will share in the cost of stay at the nursing home.
- Nursing homes offer 24-hour care. Nursing homes employ orderlies, nurses, and physicians.
- Certain health issues will accompany advancing age, for example:
 - Anxiety and depression due to declining health and/or isolation and loneliness.
 - Reduced appetite. Malnutrition and weaker immune system can follow.
 - Various forms of memory impairment and dementia are common among the elderly.



The Common Cold

- The common cold is a regular communicable disease during the winter months in Iceland.
- A runny nose, fever, and sore throat can accompany the common cold.
- In Iceland, antibiotics are **not** prescribed for the early symptoms of the common cold.
- It is recommended that people stay indoors, get plenty of rest, and take mild pain-killers and cough-suppressants, as needed (available without a prescription at pharmacies)
- There is no need to fear the common cold - it is normally resolved in 1-2 weeks.
- Of course, people should go to their local healthcare center if the common cold or other illnesses are not resolved after a short amount of time.



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Mental Health

- Mental illness and emotional problems can happen to anyone during their lifetime. They can be associated with difficult situations in our communication with others or in life.
- Excessive stress and insecurity can lead to anxiety (even post-traumatic stress disorder) and can follow traumatic events such as illness, injuries, death, or experiences during wartime, or when escaping dangerous circumstances in one's homeland.
- Many who live in Iceland will experience seasonal affective disorder during the darkest months of the year, during the height of winter.
- In Iceland, people are generally empathetic to illnesses of this kind and it is considered normal to seek medical assistance and treatment for them.



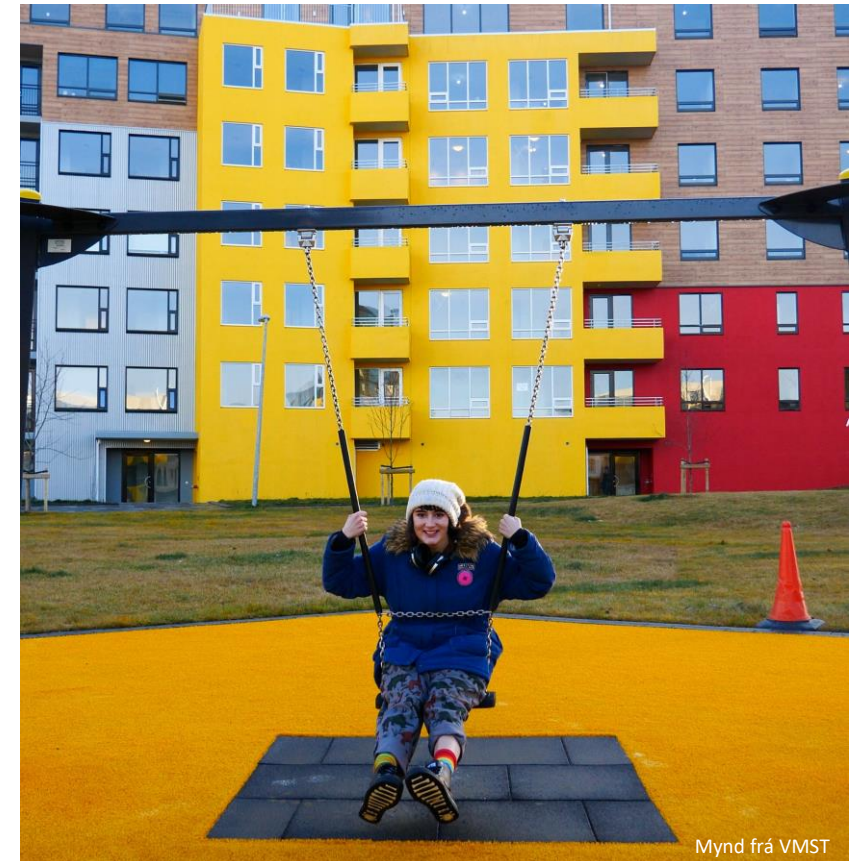
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Mental Health - Continued

- Most people who migrate to another country will undergo a certain psychological process associated with the change. Initially, people will experience optimism and relief due to their new circumstances. But after a while, many will experience depression or negative thoughts. For most, this will gradually fade away as they achieve a more balanced emotional state.
- Sometimes, mental distress and anxiety can manifest itself in physical symptoms such as headaches, stomach aches, or insomnia.
- It's important to look at the big picture when searching for the root causes of pain and dysphoria.
- It is good to be unafraid of letting people know how one is feeling, sharing one's experience and asking healthcare workers and therapists about possible reasons for one's dysphoria and pain.

Mental Health - Continued

- The healthcare center is the first place to visit when suffering from mental health problems. A general practitioner can prescribe anti-depressants, anxiolytics, and mood stabilizers and refer patients to a psychiatrist. Psychologists are also available within the healthcare system.
- Mental health treatment teams are active both at the healthcare centers and certain service centers. They offer a variety of support, in several ways.
- Landspítalinn's critical care ward for psychiatric illnesses is located on the first floor of the psychiatric ward at Hringbraut. It is open from 12:00 to 19:00 on weekdays, and from 13:00 to 17:00 on weekends and holidays.
- It is also possible to go to the critical care unit at Landspítalinn in Fossvogur.



Addictions

- Tobacco is the primary cause of cancer and other preventable diseases.
- Smoking is the most dangerous form of tobacco use and up to half of long-term smokers will die because of it.
- Chewing tobacco and snuff is also detrimental to the user's health.
- Smoking and tobacco cessation assistance is available, including consultation, courses, and pharmaceutical products and products at pharmacies (such as nicotine gum, nicotine patches and nicotine inhalers).
- Children under 18 are not permitted to purchase or use tobacco products.

Addictions - Continued

- Excessive alcohol use can be a problem. People will often try to hide their alcohol use and stop of their own accord but have difficulties doing so.
- Alcohol addiction is a treatable disease.
- Detoxification and treatment for alcohol and drug addictions is managed at Vogur, which is run by the association SÁÁ. www.saa.is
- Long-term treatments for both women and men are also available following a stay at Vogur.
- The AA association has proven useful for many in weaning themselves off alcohol and/or drugs and maintaining sobriety. www.aa.is
- The minimum age to buy alcoholic beverages is 20 years.

Addictions - Continued

- Excessive consumption of alcohol and drugs is accompanied by trouble and discomfort. Both with those who abuse alcohol/drugs, but even more so with friends and family.
- Home life is often marked by anxiety, fear, isolation, arguments, and violence.
- It is considered negligence if children must live with screaming and fighting at home due to the alcohol use of their parents/custodians.
- Other associations operate in Iceland and are focused on supporting addicts in getting well and maintaining their wellbeing, as well as supporting the families and friends of addicts with a range of issues (i.e., food addiction, gambling addiction, codependency, alcoholic's next of kin).



Mynd frá VMST

Promoting Health and Preventative Measures

- Iceland does not see much sunlight. **Everyone is advised to take vitamin D** (cod liver oil or vitamin D tablets/capsules). The recommended daily dose is age dependent.
- Physical therapists are on staff both at hospitals and in private clinics. They treat musculoskeletal pain. It is possible to get a referral from a physician for a physical therapist and the medical insurance will then cover a significant amount of the costs.
- Massage therapists and health coaches can be found at fitness centers and private clinics.
- Hiking groups operate in various locations in Iceland. They are run independently or as part of sports teams or hiking associations, www.utivist.is and www.ferdafelagid.is

Promoting Health and Preventative Measures - Continued

- People will go to psychologists (or psychiatrists) to receive help with their anxiety and obsessive disorders, or to work through trauma.
- Psychological therapy clinics also offer marriage counseling and family counseling.
- The Icelandic Health Insurance ("Sjúkratryggingar Íslands") does not pay for **privately** operated psychological treatment. However, it is possible to contact the union or municipal social services and request financial aid.
- Psychologists are also available within healthcare centers and hospitals.

Promoting Health and Preventative Measures - Continued

- There are many fitness centers in Iceland. They provide access to exercise equipment as well as an array of fitness classes.
- It is common for both men and women in Iceland to go to the gym.
- Swimming is a large part of Icelandic culture, for women, men, and children alike. Many will go to the pool every day to meet acquaintances and chat in the hot tubs. Many immigrants - including women - attend the swimming pools in Iceland and find it very enjoyable!
- Water aerobics are available at many pools and are particularly popular among senior citizens.
- The swimming pools have hot tubs, massage tubs and steam baths.
- Swimming is a healthy activity, but it can also be pleasant to just rest outside in the warm water.



Promoting Health and Preventative Measures - Continued

- Iceland offers organised screening for cervical cancer and breast cancer.
- Screenings for cervical cancer in women is conducted at healthcare centers around the country. Nurses and midwives take samples.
- Women of the age of 23-29 are offered every 3 years to come in for screening. Women of the age of 30-65 are offered every 5 years to come in for screening.
- Landspítalinn oversees breast cancer screenings in coordination with the hospital in Akureyri ("Sjúkrahúsið á Akureyri").
- Breast cancer screening is provided every two years for women aged 40-74.

Promoting Health and Preventative Measures - Continued

- Screening invitations are sent out by mail and can also be accessed electronically at www.island.is under My Pages ("mínar síður").
- The results can be accessed electronically at www.island.is („mínar síður") and www.heilsuvera.is . Women are also contacted directly if there is reason to do so.
- Invitations, attended screenings, and screening results can be viewed at www.heilsuvera.is, both normal results and when there is reason for further examination.
- Colon cancer in women and men, and prostate cancer (in men) is also common, and it is necessary to screen for that from the age of 50.

Promoting Health and Preventative Measures - Continued

- In Iceland, the use of seatbelts is mandatory. Seatbelts have saved many lives in car accidents.
- Children should, by law, always be in a child car seat that is compatible with their weight and age.
- Children must also wear bicycle helmets when riding bicycles.
- Reflectors on jackets and bags are necessary in the winter, for both children and adults.

Mental Wellbeing Help

- Emergency number 112 and www.112.is (online chat)
- The Red Cross Help Line Always open, confidential, and free. Call 1717 and online chat at www.1717.is.
- The Píeta organisation www.pieta.is, carries out activity to help prevent suicides and self-harm, and to support the next of kin. TEL. 552 2218, always open.
- The Icelandic Mental Health Alliance ("Geðhjálp"), www.gedhjalp.is, Tel. 570 1700. At the Icelandic Mental Health Alliance, trained consultants provide services to individuals with mental illnesses and their next of kin, free of charge. The consultants are obligated to maintain full confidentiality.
- Hugarafli. A non-governmental organisation, consisting of people who have experienced a personal crisis and are in recovery. Diverse group work. www.hugarafli.is TEL. 414 1550.



Mynd frá VMST

Addiction – Help

- SÁÁ. Treatment for alcohol and drug dependency. For men, women, and adolescents. Psychological services for the children of alcoholics. www.saa.is TEL. 530 7600.
- AA, www.aa.is Association of men and women in recovery from alcoholism.
- The emergency number of the AA association is: 895-1050 for the Greater Reykjavík area, tel.: 849-4012 Akureyri, and tel.: 777-5504 Reykjanes. AA meetings are held all over Iceland.
- Regarding violence in domestic relationships and support, see Chapter 3. *Children and families*.



Good Health - Worth Its Weight in Gold

- It supports physical and mental wellbeing:
 - to sleep well
 - to eat healthy and nutritious food
 - to exercise and strengthen the body
 - to go out for a walk every day - also in the winters, and try to take advantage of the daylight
 - to watch out for stress and maintain a balance in life
 - to think positively
 - to maintain a healthy relationship with friends and family
 - to do what gives one pleasure
 - to nurture your soul
 - to not smoke
 - to avoid alcohol

Websites

www.112.is

www.1717.is

www.aa.is

www.adhd.is

www.attavitinn.is

www.doktor.is

www.ferdafelagid.is

www.gedhjalp.is

www.greining.is

www.heilsugaeslan.is

www.heilsuvera.is

www.hugarafli.is

www.island.is

www.krabb.is

www.laeknavaktin.is

www.landspitali.is

www.mcc.is

www.pieta.is

www.saa.is

www.sjonarholl.is

www.sjukra.is

www.stjornarradid.is

www.tr.is

www.utivist.is



Stjórnarráð Íslands
Félagsmálaráðuneytið