

II Health and Medical Care

II-1 Medical Care (Use of medical institutions)

1. Medical Care in Japan

Japan has a high standard of medical care, but in general doctors will not explain treatments or medicines in detail. If you need such information, please do not hesitate to ask the doctor. The duration of medical examinations and explanations tends to be relatively brief.

Normally, dentists work on an appointment basis, but doctors operate on a first-come-first-served basis, so expect to wait. Compared to other countries, in general doctors in Japan are less willing to prescribe painkillers.

2. Medical Institutions

Types

- Clinic, Doctor's Office
- Hospital (well equipped facilities for examination and admission.)

When you cannot identify the sickness you suffer from or have minor symptoms, it is best to go to a clinic to seek medical advice and instruction.

Opening Hours

- Some hospitals are open only in the morning.
- Most clinics are open in the morning and afternoon, but some are closed on certain weekday afternoons.

Language

Most doctors understand simple English, but documents such as medical questionnaires are generally only available in Japanese. If you do not understand Japanese, it is recommended to visit with someone who understands Japanese.

Multilingual Medical Questionnaire: <http://www.kifjip.org/medical/> (International Community Hearty Konandai/Kanagawa International Foundation)

Procedures to See a Doctor

- Reception: You need to present your health insurance card to the receptionist of the medical institution. Then, please fill in your symptoms and medical history on the medical questionnaire. After that, wait until called.
- Examination: You will be examined in a doctor's office, and will receive medical checks and treatment if deemed necessary.
- Cashier: If you receive medicine, please wait until called to pay at the cashier. Recently, an increasing number of facilities introduced a system of writing prescriptions and having patients purchase medication at an external pharmacy.

3. Hospital Admission

Hospitals in Japan have private, twin and standard rooms (for about 4 to 6 people) for inpatients. You will need to bear some of the costs for private and twin rooms, since they are not completely covered by insurance.

To ensure the best possible treatment, the duration of the hospital stay is generally longer here than in many other countries

Complete nursing care is provided in most large hospitals, but if this is not the case, you may be required to arrange a person for attendant care. In such cases, the cost for the attendant is covered by health insurance.

4. Hospitals with Foreign Language Speaking Staff

Please refer to the information provided on the Osaka Medical Facilities Information System website, for details regarding hospitals with foreign language speaking staff. You can also contact the Osaka Information Service for Foreign Residents, or the AMDA (Association of Medical Doctors of Asia) International Medical Information Center (Appendix IX—2)

Osaka Medical Facilities Information System:

<http://www.mfis.pref.osaka.jp/apqq/qq/men/pwtpmenult01.aspx>

5. Injury or Sickness at Night or during Holidays

If you get injured or sick at night or during holidays, report to a major hospital's emergency clinic. However, foreign language speaking staff will likely be unavailable, so if you are not fluent in Japanese, be sure to take somebody who understands Japanese with you. (Appendix IX—3)

6. Medicine

Medicines roughly fall into two categories. First is prescription medicine which is available by the doctor's prescription of a clinic or a hospital. Pharmacists prescribe medicine according to the recipe. Second is over-the-counter drug which you can buy at a drugstore or a pharmacy. They are categorized according to their active pharmaceutical ingredient.

Recently, you have an option to choose generic drug. It is a pharmaceutical drug that contains the same chemical substance and safe as an original drug after the patents expire. Generic drugs are cheaper than pioneer drugs.

You can also search for your nearest pharmacy:

Health Insurance Pharmacy Search System (English, Chinese, Korean and Japanese)

<http://kensaku.okiss.jp/Pc/>