

Medical Cards

People who have HSE Medical Cards get free medical care. Medical Cards are means tested. Means tested means that you will qualify for the payment if your income is below a certain level.

A Medical Card is different from a GP Visit Card. A GP Visit Card entitles you to free GP visits only.

A Medical Card entitles you to:

- Free GP (family doctor) services.
- Free prescribed drugs and medicines. You may have to pay a prescription charge of €1.50 per item (€1 for those over 70 years), up to a limit of €15 per family per month.
- Free medical aids (appliances), for example, a walking aid, wheelchair, colostomy bags or wig/hairpiece (up to a certain value).
- Free inpatient services in a public ward in a public hospital.
- Dental, optical (eye) and aural (hearing) services.
- Free outpatient services.
- Free accident and emergency care.
- Community care services: public health nursing, home help, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, chiropody, day and respite care.
- Free maternity and infant care services.
- Short-term counselling for mild to moderate difficulties.

You may also be entitled to other benefits such as free primary school transport, exemption from Junior Cert. and Leaving Cert. examination fees and financial help with buying school books.

Your local [social welfare office](#) or a hospital-based social worker can give you more information about how to claim these benefits.

How do I qualify for a Medical Card?

- Pass a means test. This means you will have to give details of how much money you and your partner make, any savings and investments you have, and if you own property that is not your own home, to make sure you are eligible for the card.

OR

- Satisfy EU regulations about EU members receiving medical cards in Ireland
- Be a child in foster care
- Be a child under 18 who has been diagnosed with cancer within the last 5 years

- Be affected by the drug Thalidomide
- Be a woman who has had a symphysiotomy or who was resident in certain institutions
- Live in direct provision accommodation

Medical Cards are no longer automatically given to those aged over 70. You will need to pass a means test to show your income is below the limit to qualify for a card. If you are over 70, you are entitled to the GP Visit Card.

If you apply for a medical card and do not qualify, you will be automatically assessed for a GP Visit Card.

Paula (47) has recently been diagnosed with breast cancer. While her income is above the means test limit, she has increased medical costs, including consultant fees and inpatient charges related to her treatment. She also has increased transportation costs, hospital car parking fees and increased heating costs for her home. Paula should apply for a Medical Card and include evidence of her income, as well as the increased costs she faces due to her diagnosis.

Medical Cards for cancer patients

A cancer diagnosis does not automatically entitle you to a Medical Card unless you are under the age of 18 and have been diagnosed with cancer within the last 5 years.

Emergency Medical Cards can be issued by the HSE as a matter of urgency if a patient has a terminal illness and is receiving end-of-life treatment or a patient needs urgent ongoing care and needs a temporary medical card.

[Discretionary Medical Cards](#) can sometimes be issued on hardship grounds, even if your income is above the income guidelines. If you have a specific hardship, an emergency, personal difficulty, or special circumstances due to your cancer, do apply for a Medical Card. Make sure to attach copies of all requested documents, such as copies of your wage slips, social welfare payment receipts and evidence of medical costs.

Some medical aids are free if you have a medical card. Medical aids are things you may need as the result of cancer or cancer treatment to improve your quality of life. For example, wigs/hairpieces after chemotherapy or colostomy bags after bowel cancer surgery. You may also hear them called 'appliances'. If your mobility becomes a problem, you may need a walking aid or wheelchair for a time. On discharge home from hospital, your healthcare team will advise you about any medical aids you may need after treatment. They will arrange a visit with your local Public Health Nurse who will organise these necessary medical aids. You might be referred to an occupational therapist, who can see what might be most helpful for you.

We won't give up until cancer does



The quickest way to apply for a Medical Card is online at www.medicalcard.ie.

You can also download an MC1 application form from the [HSE website](#) or collect one from your [local health office](#).

You can see an example of a completed MC1 Form here.

Post the completed form to:

HSE - PCRS
Client Registration Unit
PO Box 11745
Finglas, Dublin D11 XKF3.

For any queries, call LoCall 1890 252 919 or email clientregistration@hse.ie.

The information above is an overview of the Medical Card.

For detailed information, applicants are advised to:

- Visit the [HSE](#) online
- Call Citizens Information on 0761 07 4000 – Monday to Friday from 9am to 8pm
- Visit your local [Citizens Information](#) office
- Call our Cancer Support Line on Freephone 1800 200 700 – Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm
- Contact your Medical Social Worker