

# Health care and social welfare services

## Health care

Quota refugees are offered the same municipal health care services as all other citizens in Finland. A health examination is organized for all quota refugees and their families on arrival to their new municipality. An interpreter will be present at the examination. During the interview, a nurse will examine all your prior illnesses, medications and vaccinations. It is important to take with your old prescriptions and medical statements. The available services at the health centre, appointment reservation and payment practices will also be explained. In Finland, all health care professionals are bound by law to professional confidentiality.

## Health centre

All Finnish municipalities provide health care services for their inhabitants, and usually have their own health centre. As the municipal resident in Finland you have right to use municipal health care services. If you get sick, reserve an appointment with a doctor or nurse by visiting or calling the health centre. Wait for your appointment in the health centre's waiting hall.

## Emergency health care services

Health centres are closed during the evenings and weekends. During these times, acute illnesses are treated at the emergency health care centres. These are usually located in the regional hospitals. In life-threatening situations, one can call the emergency number 112.

## Maternity clinic

As part of health care services the municipalities offer their residents information and services regarding pregnancy. Mothers are encouraged to go to the first doctor's examination at the municipal health centre before the fourth month of pregnancy has ended. The health and growth of the mother and foetus are examined in the maternity clinic. Fathers are encouraged to come along to the meetings and attend the prenatal training in the maternity clinic. Babies are usually delivered in the nearest regional hospital to your municipality. Fathers can also be present at the birth.

## Dental care

As the municipal resident you have the right to use the public dental care. Municipalities offer dental care at health centres or at dental clinics.

## Pharmacies

In Finland, a doctor prescribes the medication for illnesses. You will get a doctor's prescription which you take to a pharmacy to purchase your medication. If you have a long-term illness, take your previous prescriptions with you to the doctor's appointment in Finland.

## Social security

As the municipal resident you have the right to social security in Finland. This includes different social services and social benefits in different life situations. The Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela), provides services to all municipal residents in issues of social security.

### Immigrant's social security

Immigrants receive social security benefits based on the same criteria as Finns.

An unemployed job seeker must actively seek jobs and participate in the activities agreed in the immigrant's integration plan with the TE Office. In that case, the immigrant receives **unemployment benefit**.

A person who is not able to work because of a chronological illness, an injury, pregnancy, or some other reason, applies for benefits related to his/her condition. An immigrant who is at least 65 years old and has been living in Finland for a minimum of three years can receive old-age pension.

Finland offers also **income support** to ensure that people can live a decent life regardless of their life situation. Income support is the last benefit. This means that it is only paid if the person cannot get any other income or benefits, or if the other benefits do not cover the necessary expenses. The amount of income support decreases if the person starts receiving a salary or other benefits granted by Kela.

Apply for all the social benefits at Kela.

### Social insurance institution of Finland (KELA)

The immigrant has the right to apply for the membership for the Finnish social security system. The application must be filled out at the local Kela office. After approval of the membership the immigrant will receive a personal social security card which enables him or her to apply for and receive social benefits from Kela office. The benefits include e.g. family, study, unemployment, disability and retirement pension benefits. Kela's benefits are applied for personally and they are always paid to the applicant's personal bank account.

## **Information on social security**

Information on social benefits is available at your local Kela office and at municipality's social welfare office, as well as on [Kela's internet pages](#). Many municipalities organize information events about municipal services and social benefits for the new immigrants. In order to receive substantial information, it is important that the immigrant attends these events. Organizations working with immigrants, and immigrants who have lived in Finland for a long time, can also assist new immigrants in matters regarding daily life and available social services.