

Transport for Health

An Information Guide for Patients and their Carers



NSW DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

73 Miller Street
North Sydney NSW 2060
Tel. (02) 9391 9000
Fax. (02) 9391 9101
TTY. (02) 9391 9900
www.health.nsw.gov.au

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About Transport for Health

Transport for Health aims to help people who are most transport disadvantaged to access non-emergency health-related services.

If you need help because your health condition or financial circumstances make it difficult for you to travel independently, or the specialist services you need are not available locally, then Transport for Health may be able to help.

Transport for Health includes:

- Community transport
- Inter-facility transport
- Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS)
- Statewide Infant Screening-Hearing (SWISH) Travel.

In each Area Health Service, a Health Transport Unit has been established to help patients to arrange travel to and from non-emergency health-related services and appointments, and to provide access to reimbursement and subsidy schemes.

Health Transport Units can provide you with advice about the best transport options for your particular circumstances. We encourage you to contact your Health Transport Unit when you need to travel to access health services.

The contact details for each Area Health Service's Health Transport Unit can be found on the back page.

About Transport for Health *continued*



Where can I travel to using Transport for Health?

Approved Transport for Health destinations include any health facility or health care centre that:

- Caters to the needs of those with acute or chronic health conditions
- Provides a recognised diagnostic, therapeutic (including oral health) or primary health care service
- Provides a recognised service that promotes good health or prevents illness.

'Recognised' refers to any health service that is considered by a suitably qualified health professional to be beneficial to a person's health or wellbeing.

I've been asked to pay a contribution to my travel costs. Do I have to contribute to the cost of my travel?

Transport for Health provides assistance in organising health-related transport and also provides subsidies for long distance travel to specialist services. Under some programs within Transport for Health, full reimbursement is made. Under others, a patient contribution is required. It depends on the type of assistance you receive. For full details contact the Health Transport Unit in your Area Health Service.

Community Transport

Community Transport provides patients with access to subsidised non-emergency health related transport. It is provided by local Community Transport Organisations or other transport providers with funding from Transport for Health.

Patients with health-related transport needs are eligible to access these services. Organisations delivering these services may charge the patient a contribution fee.

I can't afford the contribution fee for Community Transport. What can I do?

Transport for Health funds a number of Community Transport Organisations to provide non-emergency health related transport. These organisations may charge you a patient contribution fee. If you need to use Community Transport for health related reasons and cannot afford the contribution fee contact your Health Transport Unit to discuss your situation.

How far in advance do I need to submit an application?

Please contact your Health Transport Unit as soon as you know you need to travel for a health appointment. This is important because, if you intend to use community transport, it may be necessary to make your appointment to fit with available transport. The Health Transport Unit can advise you on the most suitable transport assistance available to you.

We understand some health appointments are made at short notice and are not possible to reschedule. If this is the case we will do our best to assist. However, Transport for Health is for non-emergency transport so while we will assist when we can, requests at short notice cannot always be met. Contact your Health Transport Unit for advice.

Community Transport *continued*



I am using Community Transport to get to and from a specialist appointment, but I will need to stay overnight. Is there any way I can get assistance with the cost of accommodation?

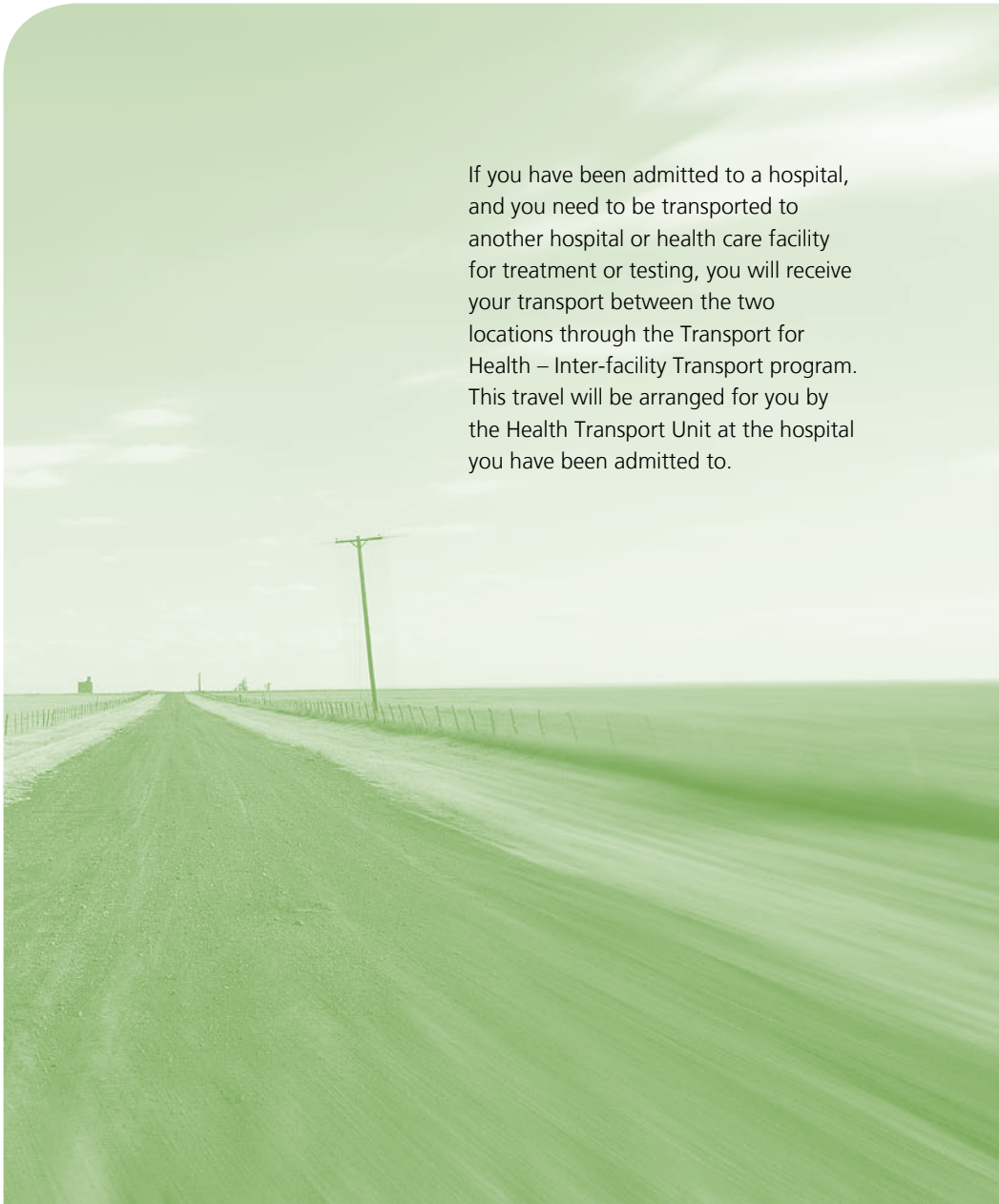
If you need to stay in accommodation while receiving medical treatment or consulting with a specialist, you may be able to claim assistance with the cost of your accommodation. For further information or to determine if you are eligible, contact the Health Transport Unit.

Who do I contact to find out more about Community Transport?

In the first instance contact the Health Transport Unit in your Area Health Service.

Inter-facility Transport

If you have been admitted to a hospital, and you need to be transported to another hospital or health care facility for treatment or testing, you will receive your transport between the two locations through the Transport for Health – Inter-facility Transport program. This travel will be arranged for you by the Health Transport Unit at the hospital you have been admitted to.



Transport for Health – Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS)

Transport for Health – IPTAAS is a subsidy program to assist people travelling more than 100km each way to attend an appointment with their nearest medical specialist.

To be eligible for assistance under Transport for Health – IPTAAS you must:

- Be an Australian citizen/permanent resident residing in NSW or Lord Howe Island
- Live more than 100km one way from the nearest treating specialist
- Have a referral by a medical practitioner to the nearest treating specialist for specialist treatment
- Receive treatment claimable under Medicare from a recognised medical specialist
- Have claimed the maximum available benefits from your private health fund first, if applicable
- Not be eligible for assistance under any other government assistance scheme
- There are specific terms and conditions relating to Transport for Health – IPTAAS. Please see the application form for further details.

I've heard there have been changes to the program. How has IPTAAS changed?

On 17 March 2006, the Premier announced changes to the eligibility criteria for IPTAAS. IPTAAS is now provided through the Transport for Health program. Changes were also introduced to increase the number of people who are eligible for assistance under the scheme.

The changes included:

- a reduction in the distance criteria for eligibility from 200km to 100km one way
- an increase in the motor vehicle allowance from 12.7c/km to 15c/km.

On 25 March 2009, the NSW Minister for Health announced further changes to the IPTAAS Program. The \$20 patient contribution for pensioners and health care card holders no longer applies to travel and accommodation costs incurred from 1 July 2009.

The patient contribution fee of \$40 still applies for IPTAAS applicants who are not pensioners or health care card holders.

This initiative is part of the NSW Government's *Caring Together - The Health Action Plan for NSW*, developed in response to the Garling Report. It aims to provide greater support for travel costs in rural and regional communities.

Why do I have to contribute to the cost of my travel under Transport for Health – IPTAAS?

Transport for Health – IPTAAS provides subsidies for long distance travel to specialist diagnostic or treatment services. It is not a free travel scheme.

The personal contribution is based on equity considerations and the recognition that persons living within 100km of the nearest treating specialist also incur travelling and accommodation expenses in accessing similar specialist medical treatment.

The personal contribution also helps to ensure that the scheme can continue to provide assistance to those needing it in the future.

Irrespective of the means of transport, a patient contribution fee of \$40 applies (not applicable for pensioners/health care card holders) for each return journey.

A co-contribution also applies to accommodation costs if you are not eligible for transport assistance under this scheme or if you are provided with transport under another government funded transport program.

I need help paying the up-front costs for travel to visit a specialist. Can Transport for Health – IPTAAS assist?

Yes. If you need assistance paying the upfront costs of your travel contact your Health Transport Unit as soon as your appointment is confirmed. Please note that you will be required to submit proof of financial difficulty (such as a pension/health care card).

If I need to stay overnight due to my appointment can Transport for Health – IPTAAS help me?

Financial assistance towards accommodation costs relating to medical appointments can be considered in the following circumstances:

- the referring medical practitioner certifies that an overnight stay is required for medical reasons
- transport schedules make return travel unfeasible on the same day; or
- where specialist medical treatment is required on an outpatient basis.

Transport for Health – Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS) *continued*



I need help paying for accommodation to visit a specialist. Can Transport for Health – IPTAAS help me?

In some circumstances this may be possible. You will need to contact the accommodation unit or Social Worker at your treating hospital to discuss this. Please note that you will be required to submit proof of financial difficulty (such as a pension/health care card), and that assistance with up-front costs for accommodation may not always be possible.

My doctor has referred me to a specialist in another state. Can I claim assistance?

Yes. Residents of NSW needing to travel interstate to access specialist medical treatment or specialist surgical oral health services are eligible to apply for assistance if the nearest treating specialist is more than 100km away from their home.

The waiting list at the nearest specialist is very long. Can I claim to visit a specialist who is further away?

Possibly. If your doctor thinks it is of significant medical advantage to you, the nearest specialist requirement can be waived and you may be able to claim to see another specialist. Ask your GP to discuss your case with the Health Transport Unit. Please note that this waiver is considered on a case-by-case basis and is not routinely offered.

I live more than 100km from my nearest treating specialist but don't have access to a private vehicle and there is no public transport. How can Transport for Health – IPTAAS help me?

Transport for Health – IPTAAS is a subsidy scheme for transport that you access, whether by private car or public transport. There may be other transport options available, including Community Transport.

I live more than 100km from the specialist, so would normally claim IPTAAS but I want to use Community Transport to get there. Can I get reimbursement under the Transport for Health – IPTAAS scheme for the Community Transport contribution fee I pay?

No. In each Area Health Service, NSW Health funds Community Transport Organisations to provide non-emergency health-related transport. This means that your health-related transport using these services is already subsidised. Patients who receive one form of government assistance for a particular service (for example, subsidised travel) cannot receive another form of government assistance (reimbursement of the contribution fee) for the same service.

My condition requires me to undergo several weeks of treatment. Do I need to fill in a form every time I go for treatment?

No. You only need to complete one application form. Your doctor can specify that the treatment will occur over a block of time by filling in a start and end date on the form. Please note, however, that a personal contribution of \$40 (not applicable for pension/concession card holders) applies to each return journey.

Reimbursement of your costs will be made only once (at the completion of the period covered). If this causes significant financial hardship, please contact the Health Transport Unit to talk about options.

If my travel and accommodation to a specialist appointment is funded through the Department of Veterans' Affairs, other government schemes or compensation claims am I eligible to claim through Transport for Health – IPTAAS?

No. You are not eligible to claim for assistance through Transport for Health – IPTAAS in these circumstances. When a person receives assistance for travel or transport through one government scheme or program, they are not eligible for the same type of assistance through another scheme for the same trip.

If I apply for assistance on more than one occasion, do I need to provide you with another copy of my pension/concession card?

No. Your details will be kept on file. We only need a copy of your card if it has been updated or changed since your last application form.

Transport for Health – Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS) *continued*



If I apply for assistance on more than one occasion do I need to provide a copy of a letter from my private health fund with any subsequent applications?

No. If you have supplied this with your initial application it will be kept on your records. We will only need another letter if your fund details change.

Do I need to have Section B – “Referral” completed each time?

Your initial application needs to be fully completed and if you are seeing this specialist for ongoing treatment your referral is valid for 12 months. After 12 months, if you are still receiving treatment you, your referring doctor and your specialist need to complete a new Transport For Health – IPTAAS application form.

I’ve already travelled to access a health service. Can I claim for assistance now under Transport for Health – IPTAAS?

Maybe. That will depend on the kind of assistance you are eligible for, the type of transport you used and how long ago you used it. Contact your Health Transport Unit to discuss your individual circumstances. Remember, it is always best to organise Transport for Health services in advance to enable us to assist you as best we can.

I don’t meet the standard criteria for the IPTAAS scheme, but believe that my special circumstances should be taken into account. What should I do?

While the criteria for Transport for Health – IPTAAS are quite specific, we recognise that exceptional circumstances do arise. Area Health Services do have some discretion to provide assistance in exceptional circumstances of hardship. Please contact your Health Transport Unit to discuss options for assistance.

How do I apply for assistance under Transport for Health – IPTAAS?

1. Download an **Application for Assistance** from www.health.nsw.gov.au/living/transport/iptaas.html or request one from your Health Transport Unit
2. A supplementary single page travel diary is available if you have multiple appointments associated with a block of treatment. This diary will make it easier to keep a full record of the travel you made and expenses you incurred. It will also help us process your claim. Please contact your nearest Health Transport Unit to request a copy of the Travel Diary.
3. Complete section A and take the form to your medical appointments. Follow the instructions on the application form. Ensure that both the referring practitioner and treating specialist complete and sign the relevant part/s
4. Send the form, attaching all original receipts and tickets and the travel diary if you have used it, to your nearest Health Transport Unit.

Can I make a complaint if I am unhappy with the service I have received?

If you would like to make a complaint regarding the service you have received contact the Health Transport Unit in your Area Health Service.

Statewide Infant Screening-Hearing (SWISH) Travel

All babies in NSW undergo screening for hearing soon after birth through the SWISH program. If a baby is identified as needing follow-up audiology services, reimbursement for travel by the baby and a parent is provided under the Transport For Health – SWISH Travel programme if:

- your baby is an Australian citizen or permanent resident residing in NSW
- your baby has been assessed as having a potentially significant hearing impairment that requires follow-up diagnostic audiology services
- you live more than 100km one way from one of NSW's three tertiary assessment facilities
- you have been referred to one of these assessment facilities by your SWISH Area Coordinator

I can't pay the upfront costs for travel and accommodation. Can Transport for Health – SWISH Travel help me?

Yes. If you need assistance paying the upfront costs of your travel and accommodation, contact your SWISH Coordinator as soon as possible. Please note that you will be required to submit proof of financial difficulty (such as a pension/healthcare card).

Do I have to contribute to the cost of my travel?

No. Transport for Health – SWISH Travel is a full reimbursement scheme for the costs of one return journey. The scheme provides assistance for one adult to travel with the baby.

Can I make a complaint if I am unhappy with the service I have received?

If you would like to make a complaint regarding the service you have received contact your SWISH Area Coordinator to discuss your concerns.

If I still need to find out more about SWISH Travel what can I do?

If you need to find out more information regarding Transport for Health – SWISH Travel, contact your SWISH Area Coordinator. Contact information is listed on the next page.

SWISH Coordinators Contact Details

AREA HEALTH SERVICE	TELEPHONE
Greater Southern Area Health Service	(02) 4476 2344
Sydney West Area Health Service	(02) 9881 7422 (Central)
	(02) 4734 3246 (Western)
Hunter / New England Area Health Service	(02) 4921 3555 (Hunter)
	(02) 6767 8100 (New England)
Greater Western Area Health Service	(02) 6393 3300 (Mid West)
	(02) 6885 8999 (Macquarie / Far West)
Sydney South West Area Health Service	(02) 9515 8139 (Central)
	(02) 9828 6866 (South West)
Northern Sydney / Central Coast Area Health Service	(02) 9413 4389 (Northern Sydney)
	(02) 4230 3875 (Central Coast)
South Eastern Sydney / Illawarra Area Health Service	(02) 9382 1462 (South Eastern Sydney)
	(02) 4253 4208 (Illawarra)
North Coast Area Health Service	(02) 6620 2563

Health Transport Unit Contact Details

For more Information on the Transport for Health program, or to discuss your health-related transport needs, contact your Area Health Service's Health Transport Unit.

AREA HEALTH SERVICE	PHONE	POSTAL ADDRESS
Greater Southern Area Health Service	1800 800 511	GSAHS Health Transport Unit Bourke Street Health Service Campus PO Box 274, Goulburn NSW 2580
Greater Western Area Health Service	1800 601 324	GWAHS Health Transport Unit Dubbo Campus Myall St, Dubbo NSW 2830
Hunter / New England Area Health Service	1800 660 361	HNEAHS Health Transport Unit Locked Bag 9783 Tamworth NEMSC NSW 2348
North Coast Area Health Service	(02) 6620 2168	NCAHS Health Transport Unit Port Macquarie Health Campus PO Box 126, Port Macquarie NSW 2444
Northern Sydney / Central Coast Area Health Service	(02) 4320 5349	NSCCAHS Health Transport Unit Level 5, Area Executive Gosford Hospital PO Box 361, Gosford NSW 2250
South Eastern Sydney / Illawarra Area Health Service	(02) 4223 8146	SESAHS Health Transport Unit c/- Port Kembla Hospital P.O. Box 21, Warrawong NSW 2502
Sydney South West Area Health Service	(02) 9515 3000	SSWAHS Health Transport Unit Royal Prince Alfred Hospital Missenden Rd, Camperdown NSW 2050
Sydney West Area Health Service	(02) 9881 7507	SWAHS Health Transport Unit c/-IHSC Level 3 Administration and Education Building Blacktown Hospital PO Box 6105, Blacktown 2148

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PO Box 672, North Ryde NSW 2113
Tel. (02) 9887 5450 Fax. (02) 9887 5452

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