

Healthcare Services

If you live in any big city, you probably have access to many healthcare services. Some may be covered by the government, while others may be run as businesses. This lesson will talk about some common types of healthcare services:

1. Family doctors
2. Medical specialists
3. Hospitals
4. Pharmacies
5. Long-term care facilities
6. Substance abuse centers
7. Mental health facilities
8. Therapists
9. Chiropractors
10. Alternative medicine practitioners

1: Family Doctors

Your **family doctor** (also called family physician) is the first person you visit when you are sick or just to check up on your overall health. Typically, children and elders go for a check up every year, while healthy adults might go every 2-3 years.



[Image Source](#)

Family doctors are not **specialists** in any disease or part of the body. They are **generalists**, with a broad knowledge of overall health. They are also helpful for dealing with common illnesses such as the common cold and the flu.

Family doctors focus on helping patients prevent disease by taking care of both physical and mental health. They often help patients with

- Stress relief
- Weight control
- Exercise plans
- Fertility testing and counseling

Since you visit your family doctor every year or few years, they will have medical record of your health. That helps them understand what is “normal” for you and catch anything abnormal. At **routine check ups**, they might screen you for early signs of common diseases that you might be at risk of, such as cancer, heart disease, and diabetes.

Family doctors also manage some common chronic diseases, which require frequent visits to the doctor. Examples include stroke, heart disease, asthma, diabetes, and cancer.

2: Medical Specialists

Medical specialists are doctors that specialize in one specific area of medicine. If your family doctor decides that you have a very serious health condition beyond their abilities to help, then your family doctor can refer you to go visit a specialist.

There are many areas in medicine, and some examples of specialists include:

- Allergists – specialize in allergies
- Cardiologists – specialize in the heart and circulatory system
- Dermatologists – specialize in skin, hair, and nails
- Gastroenterologists – specialize in digestive organs, such as the stomach, liver, and bowels
- Emergency Medicine Specialists – specialize in life-or-death situations

There are also other types of doctors that you can visit for a specific purpose:

- Optometrists – specialize in eye care
- Dentists – specialize in mouth and teeth
- Pediatrician – specialize in healthcare for young infants and children
- Geriatrician – specialize in healthcare for elders

If your condition is not too serious, or if you just want a general check up, then the family doctor’s office is the place to go. If your condition is serious, then your family doctor might refer you to a specialist. If you want a specific type of service, such as eye care or oral care, then you can also visit a specific type of doctor.

3: Hospitals

Hospitals provide a wide range of medical services to patients, including emergency room, surgery, chronic care, and **rehabilitation** (restoring someone back to health from an illness). If you have a serious problem, you should go to the hospital, not your family doctor. If your family doctor recommends you to visit a specialist, these specialists are probably working at a hospital.



[Image Source](#)

Hospitals have two types of patients: outpatient and inpatient. **Outpatients** come to the hospital for treatment and then leave the same day. **Inpatients** live in the hospital for a period of time to get treatment.

Hospitals also have doctors and nurses to provide healthcare services. **Doctors** are specialists in a particular area of medicine. Their job is focused on diagnosing the patient's problem and prescribing medication or treatment. **Nurses** have more of a caretaking job for patients. They see the patient from beginning to end of the hospital visit. Nurses check on inpatients and make sure they are feeling well.

4: Pharmacists

If your doctor prescribes medication for you, then you have to go pick up that medication at the pharmacy. These medications are called **prescription medication**, and you must have a doctor's note to get them. **Pharmacists** are the people that read the doctor's prescription and get the medicine for you. They also explain to you how to take your medicine and answer any questions you may have. There will usually be a pharmacy next to the doctor's office or inside a hospital.

Pharmacies also sell **over-the-counter medications**, which are medicines that do not require a doctor's prescription. Examples include medicine for the common cold and weak pain killers. You can get such products at pharmacies in retail shops like Shoppers Drug Mart or Walmart.

5: Long-Term Care Facilities

Long-term care facilities provide a place of living for people with disabilities who cannot take care of themselves. It can also be for elderly people who cannot live alone and can't live with their children.

In a long-term care home, the employees help the residents with activities of day living, such as bathing, dressing, grooming, using the toilet, eating, and moving around. They can also provide transportation for residents to visit other places.

An alternative to going to a long-term care home is **home-based long-term care services**. This is when you hire someone to come to your own home and provide the same services related to activities of daily living.

6: Substance Abuse Centers

Substance abusers are people who are so addicted to a drug or harmful substance that it impacts their daily functioning. The word "abuse" means to use improperly. For example, using an over-the-counter pain killer in the appropriate dosage is proper use. Taking lots of it to feel good becomes abuse.

Examples of substances that can be abused include alcohol, cigarettes, pain killers, and dangerous illegal drugs such as cocaine and ecstasy. The abuse could lead to problems with health, finances, relationship, and work. Substance abusers are also more likely to become homeless or even criminals.

Substance abuse centers are places in the community where people can go to get counseling on their substance abuse. The counselors there will help patients develop the ability to manage themselves and overcome the addiction. These places also offer group therapy sessions where substance abusers can connect, share their stories, and encourage each other to improve.

7: Mental Health Facilities (Psychiatric Facilities)

Mental health facilities are places where patients can get treatment for mental illnesses. The doctors who specialize in mental health are called **psychiatrists**. Often times, a hospital will have a psychiatric department. Just like with a non-mental illness, you can visit a psychiatrist, get some counseling, and then leave. Or if your situation is more severe, the psychiatrist might have you stay in the hospital for more intense treatment.

8: Therapists

Therapists are like doctors for our mental health, but they are different from psychiatrists. **Psychiatrists** have a medical degree, usually work in a mental health facility, and can prescribe medication to patients. Therapists do not need to have a medical degree, so they cannot prescribe medication. Instead, therapists usually focus on talk therapy, which involves helping a patient talk through their problems. There are also other types of therapists too, such as music therapists and art therapists.



[Image Source](#)

Therapy is a safe place for people to talk through life challenges such as breakups, grief, and relationship struggles. Just like how anyone (not just sick people) can go to the doctor for a check-up, anyone can go see a therapist for a check-up. However, you should definitely think about seeing a therapist if you're going through any of these symptoms:

- Thinking about an issue for at least an hour each day
- The issue makes you embarrassed and want to avoid others
- The issue is negatively impacting your school or work
- The issue is making your relationships suffer
- The issue is hurting your quality of life
- Overwhelm
- Hopelessness
- Apathy

Therapy may not solve your problem immediately like a magic pill; it takes time and patience, but it can help you develop skills to cope with your problems more effectively. If you stick with it, therapy can help you learn more about yourself, achieve your goals, improve relationships, and have better health.

Nowadays, you don't even have to go visit a therapist in person. You can chat with therapists via phone or video chat via the internet.

9: Chiropractors

A **chiropractor** is someone who helps patients with their bones, nerves, and muscles. Common problems people see a chiropractor for include

- Poor posture
- Back pain
- Neck pain
- Headaches
- Pain in joints



[Image Source](#)

Chiropractors do not prescribe medication like doctors do. Instead, they teach the patient movement exercises and stretches to resolve their problems. They may also position your body in different ways and then apply controlled force to realign your spine or joints.

Alternative Medicine Practitioners

Western medicine focuses on pills and surgery. In the west, anything that's not western medicine is considered **alternative medicine**. Alternative medicine has become much more common and includes

- Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioners
- Ayurveda (Traditional Indian Medicine) practitioners
- Massage therapists
- Naturopathy
- Homeopathy
- Reiki
- Christian Faith Healing
- Hypnosis
- Aromatherapy

alternative medicine: complementary practices

mind-body
medicine



meditation

biologically
based



herbal
medicine

body-based
therapy



naturopathy

energy-based
techniques



crystal
healing



relaxation



homeopathy



acupressure



acupuncture



hypnosis



detoxification



reflexology



reiki
healing



aroma
therapy



diet &
nutrition



chiropractic



yoga

[Image Source](#)

Alternative medicine is usually focused on natural remedies for illness, focused on things like food, emotions, and lifestyle rather than pills and surgery. Mainstream doctors will often encourage patients to seek alternative medicine as an addition to mainstream medicine since it probably won't cause any harm and will likely help patients.

Conclusion

If you live in a modern city, you likely have access to all the many types of healthcare services mentioned in this article, in which case you are very fortunate! Many people may not even know all of the healthcare services available to them. Now that you know, you can make better decisions about your own healthcare and those of your loved ones.