

Health

When you return to your home country you will need to think about healthcare. Luckily Mexico has free healthcare that is easy to use.

Start by asking friends and family for recommendations of good doctors and health services. If you return to Mexico you will be eligible for one of three public health systems. It will be your responsibility to sign up, stay on top of appointments, and keep yourself healthy.

In this section, we cover:

- Medical care
 - Healthcare plan options
 - Private healthcare
 - Dental and vision care
 - Staying healthy
 - Paying for medications
 - Mental health and substance abuse
 - COVID-19: What you need to know
 - HIV/ AIDS
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Medical Care

The training to become a doctor in Mexico is not as hard as in the US. Still, there are many good doctors throughout the country. Hospitals are usually modern and well-equipped. State-of-the-art specialist hospitals can be found in Mexico City and other cities.

Seeing a doctor is quite affordable, compared to the US. If you are enrolled in Mexico's universal health care system, INSABI (Institute of Health for Wellbeing) you can go to the doctor for free. You may have to wait, though. Even if you chose to pay out of pocket you won't be hit with a huge bill like in the US. You can see a general practitioner for just 45 pesos or \$2.20 USD! To see a specialist, you can expect to pay between \$30-\$50 USD for a short consultation.

Public Healthcare

There are three government-sponsored healthcare systems in Mexico. If you enroll in one, your medical expenses are free or minimal. How much you pay will depend on which program you are eligible for. The quality of your care can also depend on where you live. It's common to have to wait, unless your issue is life-threatening.

Private Practice

As in the US many doctors have their own private practices. You can call and make an appointment with them as you would in the US. The fee is usually around 500-1,000 pesos for a consultation. Some doctors work at a clinic during the day and hold private hours at night.

Clinics/Labs

There are many small clinics or labs in Mexico. Chopo (chopo.com.mx) is one well-respected lab. They do things differently than you might think. You can walk into most of these clinics and "order up" what you would like. You can order a colonoscopy or blood tests and a physician will do them. You might also have a private doctor who sends you to one of these labs for testing. They may ask for an order (orden médica) from your doctor.

Emergency numbers in Mexico:

- Emergency: 911
- Non emergency police: 060
- Red Cross: 065
- City hotline: 070 (in some cities)
- Information: 040
- Fire department: 068
- Anonymous report (abuse or corruption by a government official): 089
- Highway emergency: 074

Pharmacies

One of the cheapest ways to see a doctor is through a local pharmacy. Most pharmacies have a mini-clinic attached to the building. These pharmacies sometimes have no charge to see the doctor or charge very little, 30 or 50 pesos. These rates are so low because the doctor will probably tell you to take medicine that you will buy at the pharmacy. Be aware of this. Because this is how they make money, doctors sometimes give prescriptions you might not really need.

Hospitals

Mexico has many modern hospitals, both public and private. If you are enrolled in public healthcare you will go to your assigned hospital. What happens if you go to a private hospital but you don't have private insurance? You will have to pay all of the costs yourself. This will be expensive.

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Seeing a doctor at a pharmacy is ok for something like a cold or indigestion but if you feel there's something more serious going on, don't take chances! Go to the ER or see a specialist.

—Anya V.

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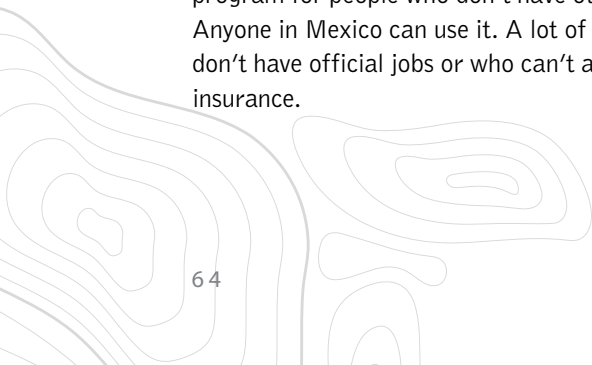
Healthcare Plan Options

Institute of Health for Wellbeing (INSABI)

The Institute of Health for Wellbeing offers a healthcare program for people who don't have other insurance. Anyone in Mexico can use it. A lot of people use it who don't have official jobs or who can't afford private insurance.

- The program gives you coverage for:
- Medical
 - Surgical
 - Pharmacy and medicine
 - Hospital services
 - Catastrophic coverage. This helps people who have expensive illnesses or who have had bad accidents.

With INSABI you don't have to sign up. All your treatment is free. All you need to do is go to your closest health department (Centro de Salud) with your CURP, birth certificate, and INE.



Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS)

You can use IMSS if you have a full-time job at a Mexican company. To use it, you have to pay some of your salary each month. With IMSS you get healthcare coverage and it will help you if you have an accident or get sick and can't work. You can use IMSS even if you are a foreign employee with residency status.

What if you don't work for a Mexican company? You can still sign up for IMSS. You will have to pay a monthly fee. You can use IMSS even if you have private insurance.

How to sign up:

If you work full-time for a Mexican company you will be automatically signed up. Your company will take the money out of your paycheck every month.

If you are not formally employed you can begin the application online at <https://serviciosdigitales.imss.gob.mx/portal-ciudadano-web-externo/home> or in person at your local IMSS office (between 8am and 3:30pm). You'll still need to submit paperwork at your local IMSS office (originals and copies) which includes:

- Application form and health questionnaire provided by IMSS
- Official ID
- Proof of address, e.g. your latest electricity bill
- CURP
- Marriage certificate (if applicable)
- Birth certificate
- Two photographs, same format and rules as those for your ID or residency permit
- Bank payment receipt for the first-year's premium. You should have paid this on the day you visit the local IMSS office.

Price for Voluntary Enrollment

The price for annual enrollment depends on your age. It ranges from 6,850 to 16,450 pesos every year. For the specific charge visit: www.imss.gob.mx/derechoH/segurosalud-familia

Pre Existing Conditions

Pre-existing conditions are illnesses you had before you signed up for insurance. IMSS won't cover some of these.

They don't cover:

- Malignant tumors
- Congenital diseases
- Chronic degenerative diseases
- Addictions
- Mental illness
- HIV
- And others

If you have any of these preexisting conditions, you cannot use IMSS. For some preexisting conditions, you can join the program. But you may have a waiting period before you can get healthcare for your condition.

To see if your preexisting condition is covered visit: www.imss.gob.mx/derechoH/enfermedad-seguros-familia

Institute for Social Security and Services for State Workers (ISSSTE)

ISSSTE gives healthcare to people who work for the government. It also helps people with accidents at work. If you work for the federal government you will be signed up automatically. For a more information on ISSSTE visit: www.gob.mx/issste

A note about public healthcare in Mexico:

INSABI, IMSS and ISSSTE are government-run public healthcare programs that cover millions of people. This means that you may have to wait for treatment. And the treatment you get may disappoint you. If your health problem isn't life-threatening, you may be put on a waiting list. How good your care is depends on where you live. Some patients report good care while others are disappointed. A lot of people need healthcare, so the care might not always meet your expectations.

Private Healthcare

Another option for medical coverage in Mexico is private health insurance. Plans have different prices and will cover different things. Private insurance in Mexico is different from in the US in a couple of ways.

Checkups and prescriptions are usually not covered. Doctors and medicine are usually cheaper than in the US, though. Most affordable private plans cover only serious illness and accidents. Deductibles usually cost more than in the US.

If you have a preexisting condition you may not be able to get private insurance. And there are waiting periods for serious illnesses. For example, let's say you are diagnosed with cancer. You've only had insurance for one year. This means you'll have to wait two more years (3-year waiting period) for your insurance to cover your treatment because cancer has a 3-year waiting period. Other conditions will have different waiting periods.

The cost of private health insurance depends on your age, health, and the deductibles and copays that you choose. An average plan for a 37-year-old man in good health with a \$1,500 USD deductible, covering serious illness and accidents, costs around \$50 USD a month. (1,000 pesos). You can work with your insurer to find a plan that fits your budget.

Two of the largest private insurance providers are GNP (www.gnp.com.mx) and Metlife (www.metlife.com.mx). They also provide auto, life and homeowner's insurance.

Check on the cost of your treatment before you go to your appointments. Don't wait for the insurance company to send you a bill. Health insurance companies should give you information to help you see how much your treatment will cost. You can always call your insurance company if you have questions.

When you get bills, look over them carefully and ask questions so that you understand them. Health insurance companies and organizations make mistakes. It's important to make sure you understand your bills before you pay them.

It's also a good idea to make sure that the doctor you want to see is in your insurance network. If not, you may have to pay the full cost of the visit.

☆ Get an insurance policy that gets you access to an "assessor." An assessor can help you if your insurance company won't pay for something they should. You can use a broker to help you get insurance with an assessor. BTG Seguros www.btgseguros.com is a broker with a good reputation that offers health insurance policies throughout Mexico.

Dental and Vision Care

If you are in one of Mexico's public health programs (INSABI, IMSS or ISSSTE) you also have dental and vision care. But, the government will only pay for procedures for your teeth and eyes. They do not pay for preventative care. In other words, the government will pay for you to get a cavity filled or a cataract removed, but not for you to get your teeth cleaned or eyes checked. You will need to pay for your own prevention care. Get regular checkups for both your teeth and eyes.

Dental and eye care are cheap in Mexico. But the cost and how good they are will depend on where you live. In some parts of the country, teeth cleaning costs only \$250 pesos. In other parts you'll be charged \$850 pesos. How good the doctors are will depend on where you go. You might use a low-cost clinic for a cleaning, but go to a better dentist for a root canal, even though it costs more.

Do you wear glasses? You can go to a small local optometrist or a large chain store such as Costco. Eye care will cost more at the big stores. There are non-profit organizations that have low-cost clinics. Here are two based in Mexico City:

Asociación para Evitar la Ceguera en México (APEC)
Mexico City
(55) 1084-1400
apec.org.mx
comunicacion@apec.com.mx

Instituto de Oftalmología Conde de Valenciana, Mexico
City, Tlaxcala and Guerrero
(55) 5442-1700
institutodeoftalmologia.org

Staying Healthy

Health insurance plans mostly help you deal with problems after they happen. Many of them only treat very serious emergencies. This means you are responsible for getting regular checkups. These checkups help you stay healthy. Find a general practitioner in your community to see you for annual checkups.

A general practitioner can also:

- Give you a full physical exam
- Order lab work
- Help you renew your prescriptions

You should have a full physical at least once a year. If you were in prison or detained in the US you should get tested for infectious diseases. Get tested for HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C (HCV), Hepatitis B (HBV) and tuberculosis.

Paying for Medications

Most pharmacies have cheaper medicines than in the US. There is usually a generic option. Generic drugs have the same active ingredients but cost less.

In Mexico, the cheapest pharmacy option is Farmacias Similares.



Routine Exams That Can Keep You Healthy

Age	Men	Women
18-39	Blood pressure, cholesterol, flu shot, syphilis screen, TDAP shot, HPV shot, chlamydia/gonorrhea, HIV, skin exam	Blood pressure, cholesterol, flu shot, TDAP shot, HPV shot, breast exam, after 21 PAP test, chlamydia/gonorrhea, HIV, skin exam
40-64	Blood pressure, blood sugar, colonoscopy (over 50), stool test, flu shot, shingles shot (over 60), prostate screen (over 50), lung cancer screen (only if you smoke), skin exam	Blood pressure, blood sugar, colonoscopy (over 50), stool test, flu shot, shingles shot (over 60), breast screen, mammogram (over 40), lung cancer screen (only if you smoke), postmenopausal bone screening, PAP smear (over 21), pelvic, HPV, skin exam
65+	Blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, colonoscopy until 75, hearing test, aneurysm screen (if smoker), prostate and lung screening (only if you have risk factors), pneumonia shot x2, skin exam	Blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, colonoscopy until 75, hearing test, mammogram until 75, bone screening, PAP smear until 65, pneumonia shot x2, skin exam

Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Deportation is stressful. Mental health support can help everyone during this time. Even if you do not have a mental health disorder, it may help to talk to someone who can help you adjust.

Lots of deported people have problems with mental health issues or substance use. If you are struggling, get help from a mental health professional. If you feel like you might hurt yourself or someone else, get help right away. Call the suicide hotline at (525) 510-2550. You can also call 911 or visit an emergency room if you are in crisis.

It's harder to move forward if you don't feel good. When you feel mentally healthy, you will feel more positive and hopeful. It may be easier to manage the struggles of deportation.

A mental health professional can help you:

- Change harmful behaviors or cycles.
- Feel stronger as you face your challenges.
- Help you come up with goals and plans to solve your problems.
- Identify how your ways of thinking change how you feel.

Trauma

Trauma from your deportation can also affect your mental health. Trauma is the emotional response you have during a stressful and life-changing event. It can also come from stress that builds up over time. Trauma is more common than people think. Traumatic events that you had as a child can have effects throughout your life.

If you have gone through trauma, treatment or counseling can help. Counselors can help you understand the effects of trauma on your wellbeing, your emotions, and your behaviors.

Some examples of trauma around immigration, according to the American Psychological Association, are:

- **Before:** Money issues, feelings of failure, fear of deportation, escape from violence, poverty, political oppression, threats or disasters
- **During:** Violence, danger, abandonment/separation, seeing death
- **After:** Money issues, conflict in yourself, conflict with others, stress from adjusting to your new home

Do you think you might need medicine for your mental health? Mental health professionals can help you decide if you need medicine. They can offer treatment for drug and alcohol addictions.

Many states have mental health clinics called “Centros Integral de Salud Mental (CISAME).” These clinics have mental health services for children and adults, and people with autism. For information, look on your state’s website. For a general list of mental health services by state, visit www.inprf-cd.gob.mx/sitios/hospitales.html

If you are located in Mexico City visit: <https://www.gob.mx/salud/acciones-y-programas/centro-integral-de-salud-mental-ciudad-de-mexico-cisame>

In Estado de México, visit: <https://salud.edomex.gob.mx/salud/cisame>

Health insurance in Mexico doesn’t cover mental health services. Pharmacies and hospitals can refer you to a professional but you will have to pay yourself. There are nonprofit organizations all over Mexico that offer mental health services. Below we describe a few of them.

There are also non-profit organizations that give support for different disorders and addictions.

- **Centro de Rehabilitación Volver a Vivir, AC.**
<https://www.facebook.com/VolveraVivirCdJrz/>
- **Cauce Ciudadano, A.C.**
<https://www.facebook.com/CauceAC/>
- **AMAR Chihuahua, A.C.**
<https://www.facebook.com/amarchihuahua/>

☆ The Ramon de la Fuente Muñiz National Institute of Psychiatry has a helpful website: <http://www.mentalizarte.com/>. It talks about how to deal with anxiety, different types of psychotherapy, and common symptoms of mental illness.

If you are struggling with drug or alcohol addiction, there are support groups you can go to for free, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (aa.org) or Narcotics Anonymous (na.org).

Are you struggling with something else? There may also be support groups in your area for issues like:

- Reentry
- Grief
- Mental health
- Disabilities
- Parenting
- Divorce
- Sexuality
- Other issues

To find a support group in your area, you can do a web search (“grupo de apoyo Ciudad Juárez”). Community centers, libraries, and churches can also help you find the support you need. See the Directory and the Healing and Moving Forward section for more information.



You take a pill for your heart, you can take a pill for your head too. It's normal.

— Grant A.

COVID-19: What You Need to Know

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to get millions of people sick worldwide. Over a million people have died from COVID-19 in the US, and 334,000 people have died in Mexico. There are now new kinds of COVID-19 that spread quickly.

There is some good news. Most people who get COVID-19 get better on their own. But some people are at risk for bad symptoms. People who are older, and people who have conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and people who are obese are at risk.

The most important things to keep yourself and others healthy are:

- Get a vaccine and booster shots (see below).
- Wear a mask around others, especially if you are indoors.
- Keep your distance from others—six feet is the recommended distance.
- Isolate yourself if you are sick or if you spent time with someone who is sick.
- Wash your hands frequently and practice good hygiene.

If you Get Sick

COVID-19 can look like a lot of different illnesses. The most common symptoms are:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Muscle aches
- For some people it starts with nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

Some people have no symptoms while others become very sick.

If you have mild symptoms, you can treat it at home, as you would a flu bug. Rest and drink lots of water. Take acetaminophen/Tylenol for the fever and drink a warm tea with honey for a cough.

Emergency warning signs

Get medical care right away if you have:

- Trouble breathing
- Pain or pressure in the chest
- Confusion
- You are too sleepy for someone to wake you

Do you think you might have COVID-19? Do you want to get tested just in case? Check with local labs and clinics to see if they offer testing. How much you pay depends where you live and what clinic you go to. Fees usually go from around 300 to 800 pesos.

Some states in Mexico have websites that list where testing is available. In Mexico City, kiosks all around offer the test for free. You can download an app to get your results. (<https://test.covid19.cdmx.gob.mx/>) Check with your local public hospital or clinic to see if they offer free testing.

Getting a Vaccine

There is no rule that says you have to get a vaccine or booster. But we recommend you get one. The US government has authorized three vaccines. The Mexican government has authorized 10 vaccines to protect against COVID-19, including the ones authorized in the US: Pfizer/BioNTech, Johnson & Johnson, Moderna.

With some vaccines, you'll need to get a couple of shots or booster shots. For more information on each, including the number of countries that have approved its use, see <https://covid19.trackvaccines.org/country/mexico/>

Some of the vaccines work better than others. But all of them can help us get COVID-19 under control. You probably won't get to choose which one you get. Any vaccine offers more protection than not getting one at all.

How can I get a vaccine?

In Mexico, people over 5 years old can get vaccinated. Check with your local government to see if pre-registration is required. You can pre-register at <http://vacunacovid.gob.mx/wordpress/>. For more information on COVID-19 and the vaccine in Mexico see <https://coronavirus.gob.mx/>. Vaccines are available at no cost in Mexico.