

### What is the National Health Index?

The NHI has been part of the New Zealand health system for many years. A person is usually allocated a NHI number when they are born.

The NHI holds the following information about any person receiving health and disability support services in New Zealand.

- Their full name and address
- Their ethnicity, gender, date of birth and date of death
- Their New Zealand residency status.

### Why is the National Health Index number used?

- The NHI number allows health professionals involved in your care to share health information without using your name and address. This protects your privacy.
- The NHI number helps to avoid confusion in cases where people have the same name or similar names.

### Who can read my National Health Index information?

Only health agencies that are involved in providing health services can read and use your NHI information.

The Ministry of Health manages and maintains the NHI under the guidance of the Health Information Privacy Code 1994.

You can find out more about the NHI from [www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz), search under National Health Index.

### What happens to my health information when I enrol with a primary health organisation?

When you enrol with a PHO, your health information is held by your health service or GP. To ensure you get the best possible health care, your GP or nurse may send some of your health information to other health professionals who are directly involved in your health care.

### Why does the PHO enrolment ask about my ethnicity?

For a number of reasons, some ethnic groups have poorer health than others and are missing out on health care. PHOs need to know what ethnic groups are enrolled with them so that they can arrange their services to better meet the needs of those ethnic groups.

### Can I see my enrolment details and medical notes to check and change, if necessary, the information held about me?

Yes – ask about this at reception.

All of your enrolment and health information will be collected, stored and used under the guidance of the Privacy Act 1993 and the Health Information Privacy Code 1994.

### What is the Health Information Privacy Code 1994?

This code was prepared by the Privacy Commissioner in 1994 to ensure that your privacy is protected. The code is enforceable by law.

Your health service may have copies of the Health Information Privacy Code Fact Sheets. If not, you can get them from the Privacy Commissioner:

Address: PO Box 10-094, The Terrace, Wellington      Tel: call free: 0800 803 909  
Email: [orders@privacy.org.nz](mailto:orders@privacy.org.nz)      Web: [www.privacy.org.nz](http://www.privacy.org.nz)

### Your rights

You have rights when you receive health or disability services whether you pay for those services or not. If you would like to find out more about your rights, or if you have any complaint about the health care you have received, you can get help from your local advisory service or Health and Disability Commissioner:

Tel: 0800 11 22 33      Email: [hdc@hdc.org.nz](mailto:hdc@hdc.org.nz)      Web: [www.hdc.org.nz](http://www.hdc.org.nz)

PHOs are not allowed to refuse to enrol you because you have poor health or require more health care. If you feel you have been unfairly refused enrolment with a PHO, contact your local district health board. All PHO enrolments must comply with the Human Rights Act 1993.

To find out about the PHOs in your area, contact your local district health board.

# Enrolling with a Primary Health Organisation

## Answering your questions

We would like you to enrol with our primary health organisation (PHO). Enrolment means you plan to get most of your ongoing health care services through us, and we plan to work with you to meet your health needs.

You will still get the same health services you get from us now. In addition, we will be working with our network of health professionals to improve the health of everyone enrolled with us.

### What is primary health care?

Primary health care is usually the first contact you have with health professionals; for example, when you visit your GP or nurse.

It is not hospital care but professional health care that is probably based near to where you and your family or whānau live or work.

Your GP and nurse provide most of your primary health care.

### What is a primary health organisation?

- A PHO is a group of primary health care providers in a particular area responsible for organising and delivering primary health care to meet the needs of all the people enrolled with them.
- A PHO will involve their communities in determining what are appropriate services for the PHO to provide.
- PHOs receive funding from the Government to subsidise a range of health services. The amount of funding received is based on the numbers and the characteristics (eg, age, sex, ethnicity) of people enrolled with a particular PHO. The funding pays for services to:
  - provide care and treatment when people are ill
  - help people to stay healthy
  - connect with groups in their community who have poor health or who are missing out on primary health care.

### Can I enrol with two primary health organisations?

No. You should enrol with the service you use most often. You can still visit other primary health care professionals, but you will benefit more if you get most of your health care from a regular doctor, nurse or health service.

### Can I see another doctor or primary health care professional who doesn't belong to my primary health organisation?

Yes.

### What happens if I visit another service?

The Ministry of Health will inform your PHO of the date of your visit to another health service but will NOT give them the name of that other health service, the reason for your visit or any of your health information. The other health service you visited will check with you that you are happy for them to send your health information to your usual doctor or health service.

### What will happen if I do not enrol with a primary health organisation?

Enrolment is voluntary.

If you choose not to enrol, you will still be able to visit any primary health care professionals to get the care you need. However, your health professional may not have received Government funding for a particular service that you need, and they may not be able to access important details about your health history to help with your health care.

### Can I enrol my children with a primary health organisation?

Yes, you can enrol any children in your care if they are 16 years of age or younger. Ask at reception to find out how to enrol your children.

### Can I enrol other members of my family or whānau?

No, if they are over the age of 16, they need to enrol themselves with a PHO, unless you have power of attorney or you are their authorised representative. However, you can take PHO enrolment forms and information home for other adult family members to consider. Ask at reception for the enrolment forms and extra information.

### Will I still need to pay to see my GP or nurse?

You will still have to pay to see your GP or nurse in most areas of the country. However, some PHOs in areas where there are higher numbers of people with poorer health may be able to offer reduced fees, or even some free health care services.

All PHO health services are legally required to publicly display their current standard charges. If you have any questions about the health services provided or the charges at a particular PHO, ask at reception.

### What if I want to change my GP and enrol somewhere else?

You can leave or change your PHO or GP at any time.

When you enrol with a new PHO, the Ministry of Health will advise your old PHO that you have enrolled somewhere else. However, they will NOT give your old PHO the name of your new health service or PHO.

Your new PHO will receive Government funding for you instead of your old PHO.

### If I enrol with a PHO, will I still be able to use my Community Services Card?

Yes, you can still use your Community Services Card for all the same services.

Some people enrolled with PHOs have found that they do not need to use their Community Services Card to get low-cost health care. However, we recommend that you hold on to your card in case, for example, you are out of town and you need to see a different doctor.

For more information about getting the Community Services Card, contact Work and Income: Tel: 0800 999 999.

### What happens to my primary health organisation enrolment information?

When you enrol with a PHO, the PHO will add your enrolment information to an enrolment register that is then sent to the Ministry of Health.

The information you provide remains confidential at all times.

The Ministry of Health uses the enrolment register information to:

- calculate how much funding to allocate to each PHO
- correct your details on the National Health Index (NHI)
- monitor the quality of health care provided by each PHO.

The following information is collected when you enrol.

- Your name and address.
- Your date of birth, gender and ethnicity.
- If you have them, your Community Services Card number, including expiry date and your High User Health Card number, including expiry date.
- Your NHI number.
- Whether you are a New Zealand resident or not (Note: if you are not a New Zealand resident but are eligible for New Zealand health services, you may still enrol with a PHO). This residency information updates your NHI information for broader health funding purposes.
- The date of your enrolment and the date you last visited your doctor or nurse.

The reason for your visit to the health service is not part of your enrolment with the PHO and will not be sent to the Ministry of Health.