

OVERVIEW OF THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Canada's publicly funded health care system is a reflection of our values as a nation, and embodies a commitment to equality, fairness and access based on need and not ability to pay, regardless of place of residence. In that regard, Canada's health care system strives to ensure that all Canadians have reasonable access to medically necessary insured services on a prepaid basis, without direct charges at the point of service.

How does our health care system work?

Canadians do not pay directly for insured services, nor are they required to fill out forms for these services. There are no deductibles, co-payments, or dollar limits on coverage for insured services. The *Canada Health Act* establishes criteria and the conditions that govern the federal contribution to health care under the Canada Health Transfer (CHT).

Provincial and Territorial Role in Health Care

The administration and delivery of health care services is the responsibility of each province or territory. Provinces and territories plan, organize and deliver hospital and physician services, public health programs and some supplementary health benefits - for example, some aspects of prescription care, vision care and medical equipment and medical appliances.

Government of Canada Role in Health Care

Canadians expect their national government to be the guardian of their shared interests and values. To this end, the federal government's role in health care includes:

- promoting national principles for insured health care services through the *Canada Health Act*;
- providing funding assistance to provincial/territorial governments for health care services consistent with the principles of the *Canada Health Act* through federal transfers;
- program and regulatory responsibilities in the area of health protection and promotion, health security and disease prevention;
- ensuring that drugs, vaccines and other therapeutic products sold in Canada are safe, of good quality and therapeutically effective;

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- fostering medical and scientific research through funding and other means; and
- ensuring access to health services for First Nations and Inuit people, military personnel, the RCMP, and inmates of federal prisons.

Benefits for Canadians

Health outcomes are one of the most important indicators of a successful health care system. On that basis, Canada has one of the best health care systems in the world. For example, the life expectancy of Canadians born in 1999 is 79 years, among the highest in the industrialized world, and the 1996 infant mortality rate of 5.6 per 1,000 live births is one of the lowest on the globe.

Our publicly-funded health care system also has economic benefits since companies in Canada do not have to fully fund health benefits for their employees as in the United States. This gives Canadian businesses a competitive edge. A healthy workforce is also a productive workforce. Our health care system therefore contributes to Canada's overall productivity and prosperity.