



HEALTH: INFORMATION FOR REFUGEES

in Oberbayern (Upper Bavaria)

englisch

Health is a human right. This applies to all people living in Germany. You have the right to be treated by a doctor. However, it is especially difficult for people that are new to Germany to figure out the German health care system (Gesundheitssystem). This brochure is for people living in Oberbayern as asylum seekers or refugees. It gives an overview of the Gesundheitssystem in Germany and your medical rights during the asylum procedure (Asylverfahren). Our mental well-being is very important for our overall health. There is a special focus on psychological health in this brochure for that reason. This brochure shows what you can do yourself to keep healthy and who can help you. Sexual health and self-determination are important requirements for our overall health and well-being. We have therefore created a second brochure with information about sexual health and protection against violence. The topics of this brochure are:

**SEXUAL HEALTH AND SEXUAL SELF-DETERMINATION
PREGNANCY AND BIRTH
PROTECTION AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

**YOU CAN FIND THIS
BROCHURE HERE:**



IMPORTANT EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS

*ALL NUMBERS ARE FREE OF CHARGE
AND AVAILABLE AT ALL TIMES*

112	AMBULANCE AND FIRE BRIGADE
110	POLICE
0800 / 655 3000	KRISENDIENST PSYCHIATRIE OBERBAYERN (PSYCHIATRIC CRISIS SERVICE OBERBAYERN, HELP IN PSYCHOLOGICAL CRISES AND EMERGENCIES)
116 016	HILFETELEFON GEWALT GEGEN FRAUEN (HELPLINE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, WITH FEMALE INTERPRETERS)
116 117	MEDICAL ON-CALL SERVICE (ÄRZTLICHER BEREITSCHAFTSDIENST)

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HEALTH

*"Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."
(World Health Organisation, 1948)*

WHAT IS HEALTH?

Health is the basis for our well-being. Every person has the right to the highest achievable measure of health. This includes physical, mental and emotional health. If our bodies, our minds and our souls are well, we are healthy.

A number of different illnesses can affect our health. There are acute illnesses or chronic illnesses. Acute illnesses cause symptoms that appear temporarily and go away again after a relatively short amount of time. They require short-term treatment. Chronic illnesses last longer and are difficult to heal. They require long-term treatment. Illnesses can have a number of different causes: They can, for example, be hereditary,

be caused by an infection, an accident or trauma. Physical and psychological health are closely connected. If you are suffering mentally, it can cause you to become physically ill. These are called psychosomatic illnesses. This could be, for example, headaches or stomach pains. On the other hand, physical suffering can cause psychological symptoms. For example, long-lasting pain can make us feel sad or hopeless. All illnesses and pains must be taken seriously and treated properly. The treatment of an illness is an important step towards a healthy life.

WHAT CAN I DO FOR MY OWN HEALTH?

- Exercise regularly and take up a sport that you enjoy. Spend as much time outside as possible, e.g., go for a walk every day.
- Make sure you have a balanced and regular diet. Eat lots of fruit and vegetables. Limit the amount of food with sugar and fat, like candy, crisps, lemonades or coca cola.

Lack of vitamins and a bad diet can cause physical and psychological illnesses or make them worse. A balanced and vitamin-rich diet is therefore not only important for the body but also for the mind. If we eat healthily, we often feel better and have more energy.

- Drink lots of water, at least 1.5 liters a day.
- Stay away from cigarettes, alcohol or other drugs.
- Make sure you sleep enough and regularly. Go to bed at about the same time every evening. Most adults need about 7 - 8 hours of sleep every night.
- Allow yourself time to relax.
- Pay attention to hygiene: Wash your hands regularly with soap. Keep a distance to other people when possible. Protect your wounds with sterile plasters and/or bandages. Air your room regularly.
- Protect yourself against sexually transmitted infections! Always use a condom if you can't rule out for sure that you yourself or your sexual partner may have an infectious disease.
- Pay attention to good dental hygiene: brush your teeth twice a day and use dental floss. Start brushing your child's teeth twice a day as soon as they get their first tooth. You can find special tooth brushes and tooth paste for children in drugstores.
- Pay attention to a regular daily routine: Regularity and routines when it comes to sleeping, eating, exercising and relaxing help you to stay fit and find stability in your everyday life.

WHO CAN HELP ME?

See a doctor if you have any medical symptoms, illnesses or pains. Get medical support as soon as possible. That way your symptoms can be relieved quickly. A lot of illnesses can be treated better if they are discovered early. (See page 14).

MEDICAL RIGHTS IN THE ASYLUM PROCEDURE

In the first period after you arrive in Germany, governmental agencies are responsible for providing your health care. This is, for example, the social welfare office (Sozialamt) or the health department (Gesundheitsamt). In many communities you will find these departments at the district administration (Landratsamt).

As long as you are in the asylum procedure, you don't have a regular health insurance and only have access

to reduced medical services. This is regulated by the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act (Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz).

This usually includes necessary and urgent treatments by doctors and dentists, essential vaccinations and medical check-ups. You have the right to medical care if you are sick, have had an accident or are in pain. You also have further medical rights if you have special requirements or need protection (see below).

MEDICAL CARE IN THE FIRST 36 MONTHS AFTER ARRIVAL IN GERMANY FOR PERSONS WITH ANKUNFTSNACHWEIS, AUFENTHALTSGESTATTUNG OR DULDUNG

- On arrival at your initial registration center (Erstaufnahmeeinrichtung) you have to undergo an obligatory medical check. This is where infectious diseases are meant to be discovered and treated. Please inform the doctor about a possible pregnancy. In this case, x-ray examinations will be replaced by other procedures.
- Many of the registration center (Aufnahmeeinrichtung, so-called "Anker-Zentren" or Anker-Dependances") offer medical consultation hours. You will be transferred to specialist doctors if necessary.
- In Bavaria, you need a form for medical treatment (Krankenbehandlungsschein) to see a doctor outside of refugee centers.

WHAT IS A KRANKENBEHANDLUNGSSCHEIN?

The Krankenbehandlungsschein is a form with your personal information that you have to show the doctor outside of your refugee center. With this, you can get medical treatment even without health

insurance and without paying any money. The doctor takes care of the payment afterwards directly with the Sozialamt.

WHERE DO I GET THE KRANKENBEHANDLUNGSSCHEIN?

In most cases you have to request the Krankenbehandlungsschein from the Sozialamt or the Landratsamt. It is generally valid for three months and can be renewed again after this time period. If you need help with getting the Krankenbehandlungsschein, ask the social services at your center or other counselling centers (see page 13).

The Krankenbehandlungsschein must be brought to the appointment with the doctor. The original Krankenbehandlungsschein stays with the general practitioner (GP). Before handing over the original to the GP, take at least one copy and keep the copy.

WHICH DOCTORS CAN I GO TO WITH THE KRANKENBEHANDLUNGSSCHEIN?

The Krankenbehandlungsschein is valid for GPs (general practitioners), gynaecologists (woman doctors), paediatricians (child doctors) and eye doctors.

important

In emergencies – for example if you have been wounded or have very strong pain, high fever, or sudden and strong dizziness – you will be treated without a Krankenbehandlungsschein. In the emergency room at a hospital, for example, you do not have to show a Krankenbehandlungsschein to get treated. If you have the original or a copy of the Krankenbehandlungsschein, show it to the staff in the hospital.

In general, medical emergency means that immediate medical care that cannot be postponed is necessary. Otherwise, severe health damage would occur, or life would be endangered.

important

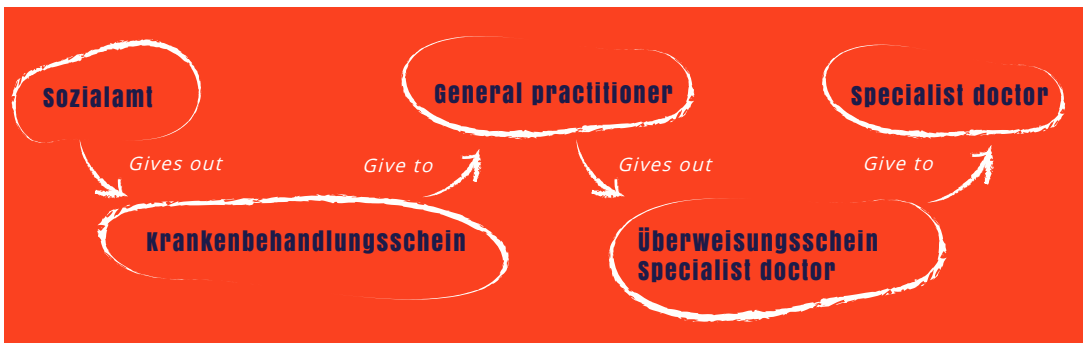
The Krankenbehandlungsschein to see a GP is usually regionally limited to the district (Landkreis) which you live in. For appointments with specialist doctors, it is usually possible to go to other districts. It says on the Krankenbehandlungsschein which districts you can get treatment in.

WHICH DOCTORS DO I NEED AN ADDITIONAL FORM FOR?

- **Dentists:** The regular Krankenbehandlungsschein is not valid for seeing a dentist. You can get a form for dental treatment (the so-called Zahnbehandlungsschein) at the Sozialamt or the Landratsamt for treatment of acute symptoms. The Zahnbehandlungsschein is usually valid for three months. You will need approval if you want to change dentists.
- **Other specialists:** If you want to see another specialist doctors (e.g., orthopaedic doctor, psychiatrist, cardiologist) you need to make an appointment with a GP first. There you will get a referral (Überweisungsschein) to the relevant specialist doctor if necessary. With the Überweisungsschein you can make an appointment at the respective specialist doctor. Bring the Überweisungsschein to the appointment with the specialist.

You will usually need the Überweisungsschein to a specialist in addition to the Krankenbehandlungsschein. In general, a copy of the Krankenbehandlungsschein is enough to give to the specialist doctor.

Find more information about the German health care system, health insurance and the different medical specialisations in Germany under page 14.



WHICH MEDICAL SERVICES DO I GET?

- If you are sick or in pain, you will get the necessary medical care. This includes medication but also the costs for language mediation! You need to apply for getting language mediation. Ask your Sozialdienst or Sozialamt/Landratsamt.
- Also, if you are suffering from psychological symptoms, you have the right to see a specialist for psychiatry (see page 20).
- If there is a risk of an accident or other health damage, additional necessary services are provided (e.g., glasses as a visual aid).
- If requested, you can get all the officially recommended vaccinations. Vaccination against the measles is compulsory (see page 18). All people living in refugee centers that were born after 1970 must be vaccinated against measles after one month.
- Pregnant women and new mothers have a claim to the same care as persons with a regular health insurance. This includes check-ups for the mother and child, help from a midwife, hospital stays and medication or remedies (see QR Code).
- You are entitled to all recommended early health development examinations for newborns and children up to the age of 5 (see p 17).
- You have the right to all recommended and necessary cancer screening examinations. This includes annual check-ups at a gynecologist for women from 20 years of age, and an annual prostate check at a urologist for men from 45.



important: PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE PEOPLE ARE ALLOWED ADDITIONAL CARE!

Particularly vulnerable persons are, for example:

- unaccompanied minors
- persons with disabilities
- older people
- pregnant people
- single parents whose children are minors
- people affected by human trafficking, torture and violence
- people with severe physical and mental illnesses

It is regulated by the European Union that these groups of people get more (psychological) support and protection. Please inform the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), your refugee center management (Unterkunftsleitung) and your Sozialdienst, if you belong to one of these groups.

Please also inform your Sozialdienst if you need any additional medical care. Get support if you feel threatened or are being threatened. If you are in acute danger of violence, you can find protection at a point of refuge or a women's shelter (see QR Code).



WHICH MEDICAL SERVICES DO I NOT GET GENERALLY?

It says on your treatment forms (Krankenbehandlungsschein and Überweisungsschein) which treatments you do and which you do not get within the first 36 months of your stay in Germany. If you have applied for additional medical care and it has been approved, this will be stated on the medical form. In general, the following medical treatments are excluded:

- **Dental prosthesis treatment. Dental services only include urgently necessary treatments.**
- **In vitro fertilization (IVF)**
- **Treatment for chronic illnesses, if you are not in pain or urgent treatment is necessary. You definitely have the claim to get treatment, if the illness would get worse without treatment.**

MEDICAL CARE AFTER 36 MONTHS OF BEING IN GERMANY FOR PERSONS ANKUNFTSNACHWEIS, AUFENTHALTSGESTATTUNG OR DULDUNG

Asylum seekers with Aufenthaltsgestattung and people with Duldung, who have been in Germany for more than 36 months, receive an electronic health card (Gesundheitskarte).

WHAT IS A GESUNDHEITSKARTE?

A Gesundheitskarte gives you direct access to medical care. This means you do not need a Krankenbehandlungsschein. You receive

so-called analogue services (Analogleistungen). This means almost all medical services of the regular health insurance (see page 15).

WHERE DO I GET THE ELECTRONIC GESUNDHEITSKARTE?

You get the Gesundheitskarte at your Sozialamt. In general, the Sozialamt is obliged to issue the Gesundheitskarte immediately after 36 months of

being in Germany. Should this not be the case, go to your Sozialdienst or to other counselling centres (see page 13).

If you receive a positive notification about your asylum procedure from the BAMF, you will become part of the regular health care system in Germany. This means, you have to become a member of a health insurance provider (Krankenkasse) (see page 14).

The date that you can join the Krankenkasse depends on the positive notification. With some notifications you are entitled to join a Krankenkasse from the first day of the following month. Some other notifications only allow you to join after you have been issued a residence permit (Aufenthaltserlaubnis). The issuance of the Aufenthaltserlaubnis can be delayed. If you have any problems, go and see your Sozialdienst or a counselling center (see page 13).

WHAT CAN I DO MYSELF?

Find out about your medical rights and make use of them! You have the right to treatment for accidents, pains or sickness at all times during the asylum procedure.

- **Handbook Germany:** online guide to the current health care service for refugees in Germany. In English (with the function ReadSpeaker for listening). <https://handbookgermany.de/en/healthcareforrefugees>
- **Bundesministerium für Gesundheit (Federal ministry of health):** online guide - health for asylum seekers in Germany. In German or English (further down on the website the complete online guide can also be downloaded in the languages Farsi, Dari, Pashtu, Kurdish and Arabic). <https://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/themen/internationale-gesundheitspolitik/migration-und-integration/fluechtlinge-und-gesundheit/online-ratgeber-fuer-asylsuchende/allgemeine-informationen-zur-gkv.html>

WHO CAN HELP ME?

First point of contact for the Krankenbehandlungsschein or joining a gesetzliche Krankenkasse is the Sozialdienst, that is responsible at your refugee center (e.g., Caritas, Diakonie, AWO).
Other counselling centers:

- **Migrationsberatung im Bellevue di Monaco (hpkj e.V.)** – (Migration counselling at Bellevue di Monaco)

Free and confidential counselling for general questions, for example about health care.

Support with applications

Counselling in English, Arabic, Kurdish and French possible

Consultation hours (without registration):
Monday and Thursday: 10am - 12pm;
Tuesday: 4pm - 6pm

Address: Bellevue di Monaco, back building.
Müllerstraße 2, 80469 Munich

Telephone: 0176 – 104 911 66 or 0176 – 104 911 65

Email: migrationsberatung@hpkj-ev.de

<https://bellevuedimonaco.de/veranstaltungen/kategorie/migrationsberatung/list>

- **Malteser Migrations- und Integrationsberatung für Erwachsene** (Malteser migration and integration counselling for adults)

Free, confidential and, if requested, anonymous counselling for migrants and people in need of protection over the age of 27

Counselling for all social and legal issues of integration in Germany, e.g., health, finances, residence

Counselling in German, French, Greek, Spanish, Lingala

Counselling with an interpreter for other languages possible (it is necessary to book an appointment for this service!)

Open consultation hours:

Monday and Thursday: 9.30am - 1pm,
further consultation hours with appointment

Address: Streitfeldstr. 1, 81673 Munich

Telephone: 089 43 608 552, -553, -554, -555

Email: migrationsberatung.muenchen@malteser.org

www.malteser-bistum-muenchen.de/hauptmenue/malteser-migrationsberatung.html

HEALTH CARE SYSTEM IN GERMANY

Every person in Germany has the right to receive appropriate medical help. This applies to everyone, regardless of their origin, age, religion and other personal characteristics.

By law, every person with residence in Germany must have health insurance (Krankenversicherung). This is to make sure that every person is protected in case of illness

Important:

Asylum seekers are excluded from this obligation in the first 36 months of being in Germany. You are still entitled to medical care during this time. Please note that this is managed in a different way to the regular health care system (see page 8).

HEALTH INSURANCE

There are two kinds of health insurances (Krankenkasse) in Germany: the statutory health insurance (gesetzliche Krankenversicherung) and the private health insurance (private Krankenversicherung). The respective health insurance provider (Krankenkasse) issues a card that has to be checked and scanned when you receive

medical treatments. With this card, your medical care is paid for directly by the Krankenkasse. There are many different Krankenkassen in Germany that offer insurances. You can choose your gesetzliche Krankenkasse freely. The differences lie in the services they offer and the supplementary payments for specific medical treatments.

GESETZLICHE KRANKENVERSICHERUNG:

- All insured persons receive the same medical services, regardless of their gender, origin, age and contributions paid.
- There are family insurances (Familienversicherungen) for families. Your spouse or life partner and/or your own children up to the age of 18 or 25 (if they are still in school, studying or in an apprenticeship) are also covered.
- The medical services of a gesetzliche Krankenkasse include general medical treatments and medication that has been prescribed by a doctor. Examples for these medical treatments are: treatment of illnesses, hospital treatment, assistance or treatment by a midwife during and after pregnancy, treatment by a dentist, medical check-ups for children and adults, psychotherapy and nursing care.
- The insured person has to pay an additional contribution for any further medical treatments. The contribution depends on the Krankenkasse and the doctor will advise you of the costs before the treatment.
- In general, an employee has to pay a monthly contribution to the gesetzliche Krankenversicherung. This is dependent on the employee's current wage. Your employer also contributes to your insurance costs.

- People that are not employed (e.g., students, self-employed people), have to pay the whole monthly contribution themselves which varies according to income. If you have no regular income, you will have to pay the minimum contribution.
- If you are receiving benefits from the Jobcenter, the Jobcenter pays for your Krankenversicherung.
- You can add further insurances to your gesetzliche Krankenversicherung. You will, however, have to pay for these yourself. The employee doesn't pay for any additional insurances.

PRIVATE KRANKENVERSICHERUNG:

A private Krankenversicherung is for people that are not insured with a gesetzliche Krankenversicherung. These people are, for example, self-employed people, civil servants and people with a high income. The monthly contributions differ according to age and state of health. The private Krankenversicherung contracts can include services that a gesetzliche Krankenversicherung doesn't cover, e.g., tooth replacement.

Important:

People that are in the asylum procedure in Germany don't have a Krankenversicherung yet. Read about which medical services you can get during your Asylverfahren and how to get them on page 7. Only after your asylum application is accepted you will become insured regularly.

WHO CAN HELP ME WITH HEALTH PROBLEMS?

EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBER 112

Under the emergency phone number 112, you can reach the emergency services (ambulance, fire brigade, police) in the whole of Germany and in countries of the European Union free of charge. A medical emergency is when urgent medical help is needed and cannot be postponed. This means that without medical help there could be damage to a person's health or their life is in danger. Dial the number 112 in cases of:

- **Severe injuries or burns**
- **Unconsciousness**
- **Symptoms that indicate a stroke, for example,**

acute problems with movement, speech or sight

- **Indicators for a heart attack, for example, tightness in the chest, cold sweats**
- **Severe pains**
- **Allergic shock**
- **Acute and severe shortness of breath, for example, during a major asthma attack**

The emergency services (Rettungsdienst) speak German and English. They will ask you questions on the phone. Listen carefully and try to answer the questions as well as possible. This way the emergency service can get to you as quickly as possible, treat you and take you to hospital if necessary.

EMERGENCY ROOM AT THE HOSPITAL

If your life is not in danger but you need urgent medical care and all the doctor's practices are closed, you can go to the emergency room (Notaufnahme) of your nearest hospital yourself. No doctor or hospital can refuse treatment in an emergency, even if the patient has no health insurance. In an emergency, you don't need to have an insurance card or form for medical treatment (Krankenbehandlungsschein). If you have an in-

surance card, a Krankenbehandlungsschein or a copy of your Krankenbehandlungsschein, please bring it to the hospital.

Important:

Your personal information as a patient is protected by medical confidentiality and cannot be passed on to any state authorities, like the immigration authority (Ausländerbehörde).

DOCTORS IN A DOCTOR'S PRACTICE

The diagnosis and treatment of an illness is carried out by a doctor in a doctor's practice. He or she can write prescriptions for medication or send you to hospital for further treatments. The examination or the treatment is paid for by the health insurance or social welfare office (Sozialamt). You can pay for the costs (e.g., for additional services) yourself if you wish.

In general, you will need an appointment to see a doctor. You can make an appointment by phone or online.

Important:

Please note that all doctors are bound by medical confidentiality and only certain infectious diseases need to be reported to other authorities. In any case your medical diagnosis will not have a negative effect on your Asylverfahren.

Important:

Please keep all the examination documents that you receive safe. Examples of these documents are the vaccination card (Impfpass) and maternity log (Mutterschutzpass). These documents contain necessary information that could be important for other doctor's visits or hospital stays.

GENERAL PRACTITIONERS, GP (ALLGEMEINÄRZT*INNEN):

Doctors for general medicine or "house/family doctors" (Hausärzt*in) are usually the first contact person near you for any questions about health

and illnesses. They can treat many illnesses themselves. For specific illnesses, the GP will refer you to a specialist.

SPECIALIST DOCTORS (FACHÄRZT*INNEN):

There are specialist doctors you can go and see directly for medical check-ups and treatments.

Examples for specialist areas:

- Children's health care (paediatricians)
- Eye care
- Gynaecology (women's health care)
- Orthopaedics (joints and bones)
- Cardiology (heart)
- Psychiatry (mind and soul)

Important:

To see a dentist or a specialist doctor, you might need a form for dental treatment (Zahnbehandlungsschein) or referral (Überweisungsschein). Find more information about medical rights in the Asylsystem from page 7. Specialist doctors work in hospitals or in their own specialty practices. There is a large possibility that the right specialist doctor is far away and you will have to wait a long time to get an appointment. In urgent cases your GP can help you get an appointment quickly.

MEDICAL CHECK-UPS FOR CHILDREN

In Bavaria, early detection examinations (Früherkennungsuntersuchungen) are mandatory. These so-called "U-Untersuchungen" are examinations of newborn babies and children up to the age of 6. They are very important for checking a child's healthy development and to prevent illnesses.

The examinations U1 to U9 are especially important. The U1 examination takes place straight after birth and usually at the hospital. The following examinations (U2 to U9) take place in set time intervals until the child is 6 years of age. The children's doctor (Kinderärzt*in) carries out the examinations. He or she also gives you advice on your child's development if you have any questions or problems.

Important:

Keep to the set times of these examinations for your children. Only by doing so, your child's development can best be monitored and the right support can be found if needed. If you don't keep to these appointments, you might have to deal with cuts by the health insurance.

Important:

At the first examination U1 you will get a check-up booklet for your child (Kinderuntersuchungsheft). All of the examinations are documented in this booklet. Keep the booklet safe. Bring your child's Kinderuntersuchungsheft and vaccination card to all the following appointments.

PROTECTIVE VACCINATIONS

There are a few recommended vaccinations (Impfungen) in Germany. These include, amongst others, vaccinations against tetanus, diphtheria, polio, mumps, measles and rubella.

Ask your GP about the recommended vaccination. The measles vaccination is mandatory for the following people:

- People living in refugee centers (Flüchtlingsunterkunft) that were born after 1970.
- Children from the age of 1 that are in daycare (Kita), kindergarten, school or similar establishments.
- People that were born after 1970 and work in a shared accommodation facility or medical facility (e.g., school or hospital)

Important:

If you don't have a vaccination card yet, you will get a paper booklet from your doctor. All of your Impfungen are documented in this booklet. Keep this record of your vaccinations safe as there is usually no copy or digital version.

DOCTOR SEARCH

You can find the right GP or specialist doctor near you on this homepage: <https://dienste.kvb.de/arztsuche/app/einfacheSuche.htm>

If you click on "Expertensuche" (expert search) and then "weitere Optionen" (further options) you can look for a doctor that speaks your language.

MEDICAL ON-CALL SERVICE (ÄRZTLICHER BEREITSCHAFTSDIENST):

116117 (Germany-wide free on-call service number)

Are you not in acute danger but need urgent advice from a doctor? This is what the ärztlicher Bereitschaftsdienst is for. It is available nights, weekends and on bank holidays. If you call the number 116117 you will be transferred to the right doctor free of charge.

Important:

Please note that you might need a Krankbehandlungsschein during the Asylverfahren. (Find more information about medical rights in the Asylverfahren from page 7). The staff members at the ärztlicher Bereitschaftsdienst usually speak German and English.

EMERGENCY PHARMACY (NOTFALLAPOTHEKE)

Particular pharmacies (Apotheken) are even open nights, weekends and on bank holidays. There is an alternating emergency pharmacy-service. So, it is not always the same pharmacy that is open outside of the regular opening hours. You can find out which

pharmacy is currently open 24 hours near you on the following homepage. Enter your postal code to do this:

<https://www.aponet.de/apotheke/notdienstsuche>

FURTHER MEDICAL SERVICES

There is a large range of medical services in Germany. This includes different forms of therapy, e.g., physiotherapy, ergotherapy, pain therapy. You can also find holistic methods of treatments in practices, e.g., natural medicine. You can ask your GP about additional treatment possibilities.

You can find a detailed collection of information about the health care system in Germany in the guide "Gesundheit für alle" (health for everyone), including information about health insurance, preventative health care (Gesundheitsvorsorge) and nursing care insurance (Pflegeversicherung). It is available for download in 14 different languages:

<https://www.wegweiser-gesundheitswesen-deutschland.de/download>

MENTAL HEALTH

WHAT IS IT?

Mentally healthy means that we feel good emotionally and psychologically. According to the World Health Organisation, mental health is a state, in which we can make full use of our abilities and cope with daily challenges. Our mental health determines how we think, feel and act. Our mental health is affected by several different factors. It is very important that

- we feel safe and live a life free of violence
- we have a secure future and a secure income
- we can make our own decisions about our life and are in control over our own life

Trusted people, such as friends, family and partners, can also have a positive effect on our mental health. A healthy diet, regular exercise, a regular daily routine, enough rest and sleep contribute to mental health.

PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS RELATING TO FLIGHT AND ASYLUM

Many people have to flee their home countries because of war and violence. Many people also experience violence while fleeing to Germany. Violent experiences can leave wounds in our soul, especially when we are helplessly exposed to them. The term trauma refers to an exceptional psychological situation in which our life or our physical or mental well-being is at risk. Experiencing another persons' life or well-being in danger can also cause trauma.

Just like our body has wounds after an injury, our soul can be wounded by bad experiences.

These wounds can show as various symptoms, such as problems falling asleep or sleeping through the night, nightmares, frequent memories of what happened, difficulty concentrating and forgetfulness, anxiety, irritability and aggression. Some people lose interest in things they used to enjoy. Some people constantly feel sad or lonely.

These symptoms are a normal reaction to a bad experience. A lot of people that have had traumatic experiences struggle with similar symptoms.

The symptoms do not mean that the person experiencing them is crazy. These symptoms are human. Especially if you do not feel comfortable or safe in your living situation after traumatic events, the symptoms can become worse.

The situation for asylum seekers in Germany can

therefore be a huge burden for the soul: During the asylum process, a lot of people have no certainty regarding their own future. Their possibilities to make decisions about their future are very limited. Many people feel completely at the mercy of the asylum system. The uncertainty and powerlessness about one's own future and the future of one's family can put a huge strain on the soul.

In many refugee centers the living conditions are very stressful: Residents are often unable to make decisions about their own lives. For example, they cannot prepare their own meals. They have to live with people they don't know. It is loud and overcrowded. There are arguments. There is no privacy. There are limited possibilities to engage in useful activities. It is difficult to get reliable information, for example, about how the asylum system works or which rights a person has.

It is normal and completely human that traumatic experiences, an uncertain future and difficult living conditions affect mental health.

Remind yourself that living in the refugee center is just a phase in your life. You will not live in a refugee center forever. It will be possible to lead an independent and self-determined life in the future. For this, it is very important that you become well informed about the asylum procedure and your residency options.

WHAT CAN I DO FOR MY MENTAL HEALTH?

- Get reliable information and seek personal advice on important topics like the asylum procedure or educational opportunities. Take advantage of informative events and support services.
- Engage in activities that you enjoy, such as sports, painting, reading, dancing, praying...
- Take time for yourself. Treat yourself to peace and relaxation. Especially mothers often have no time for their own needs. Try to do something just for yourself every day, like going for a walk outside.
- Make plans for the near and distant future, for example: „On Monday I will study German and then meet my friend.“ or „One day I will work as a nurse.“
- Spend time with people that are good for you. It often helps to talk to trusted people about your feelings. This makes you feel less alone and shows that other people have similar concerns.
- Keep reminding yourself of your own strengths. The fact that you managed to come to Germany already shows that you are a very strong person.
- Try new things like hiking or doing something creative.
- Be kind and good to yourself. Do not blame yourself.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Make sure you have a healthy lifestyle and get enough sleep.

Many people have sleeping problems. They lie awake in bed for hours, cannot fall asleep or sleep through the night because of worries, fears and stress. If you have sleeping problems, these tips can help you:

- Do not sleep during the day or, at the most, 20 minutes at noon.
- Make sure you have a regular daily routine. Go to bed at about the same time every day.
- Spend time outside during the day, go for a walk or do sports.
- Do not drink anything that contains caffeine, such as black or green tea, energy drinks, coffee or coke, at least four hours before bedtime.
- Do not use your smartphone in the hour before going to bed.
- Do something relaxing before going to bed (for example breathing exercises or listening to quiet music).
- Only go to bed, when you are tired.
- If you wake up from a nightmare, do something that distracts you and brings you back into the here and now. Drink a sip of cold water, take a few breaths at an open window, take a shower, read something, etc.

WHO CAN HELP ME?

Often emotional wounds are so deep that we cannot cope with them alone. There are ways to relieve the psychological symptoms. With treatment, the emotional wounds can heal faster and better, just like a physical injury. You have the right to professional support, for example by a psychiatrist (see page 23).

Psychiatrists are mental health specialists. Your general doctor can give you a referral (Überweisungsschein) to a psychiatrist.

Seeing a psychiatrist does not mean you are crazy. There is no reason to be ashamed of it. The psychiatrist can find ways to relieve psychological symptoms. With some symptoms it is necessary to take medication for a limited time. Some medication can help you get back to sleeping regularly. Other medication can help you feel stronger and more motivated again. A psychiatrist can prescribe such medication. It is very important that you take the medication exactly as instructed by your psychiatrist. If you do not feel any change or your

symptoms get even worse, it is very important that you go see your psychiatrist. Psychotherapists can also help deal with psychological wounds. In psychotherapy, you speak with a therapist regularly about your symptoms. The therapist can guide and support you confidentially. He or she suggests possibilities and exercises to help process your experiences and relieve your symptoms. Unlike a psychiatrist, a psychotherapist

cannot prescribe medication. In some reception centers (so called Anker centers), there are psychologists and psychiatrists. If you want to receive psychological support, please ask the social service in your center. Also, the social service (Sozialdienst) can help you to arrange an appointment with a psychiatrist or other service providers outside the center.

FURTHER CONTACT POINTS FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS:

Krisendienst Psychiatrie Oberbayern

(Emergency Psychiatry Service for Upper Bavaria)

- Available day and night, free of charge:
0800 / 655 3000
- Phone support and consultation in the event of psychological crises and emergencies
- Referral to counselling services and clinics
- If needed, home visits to persons from the age of 16 up
www.krisendienste.bayern/oberbayern

TAFF - Therapeutic services for refugees

- Free psychological support and counselling for refugees
- With interpreters if required
- At various locations: Freising, Mühldorf, Rosenheim, Starnberg, Weilheim Schongau, Landsberg am Lech and Munich
- Contact person: Mrs Irmgard Emmert
Tel: **0911 9354 395**
E-mail: emmert@diakonie-bayern.de
- TAFF website with all locations:
<https://www.welten-verbinden.de/de/taff/>

Caritas NUR

- Free psychological support and counselling for refugees
- With an interpreter if needed
- Please fill out the registration form:
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSci-W4cNThxDtIV8Owzg-Y2-Ahbt3IefusZnW-NomZc-S03uLw/viewform>
- Registration and inquiries also possible by phone (089 23114943). Please leave a message and your contact details
- You might have to wait 1- 3 months to get an appointment.
- Address: Bayerstr. 73, 80335 München, 2. floor, Caritas München-Mitte

Refugio München

- Free treatment and counselling for traumatized refugees adults and children in Munich, Landshut and Augsburg
- In Munich: Registration für psychotherapy und social counselling for adults (20 years and above) only possible twice a year (usually in April and October). Be aware of the registration periods!
- Registration für psychotherapy und social counselling for children (up to age 19) possible at any time
- Address in Munich: Rosenheimer Straße 38, 81669 München
- Tel.: **089 / 98 29 57-0**
- Email: info@refugio-muenchen.de
www.refugio-muenchen.de

FrauenTherapieZentrum – Sozialpsychiatrischer Dienst für Frauen

(Social Psychiatric Service for Women)

- Free consultation and support for women with psychological crises and illnesses
- With an interpreter if needed
- Booking an appointment by phone is necessary (in English or German): 089 747 370 70
- Address: Güllstrasse 3, 80336 Munich, spdi@ftz-muenchen.de
<https://ftz-muenchen.de/home-2/ftz-sozialpsychiatrischer-dienst/>

Psychiatrists, psychotherapists and the staff of the listed contact points work confidentially and are bound to professional secrecy. This means that they are not allowed to pass on any information about you.

**WHAT WE STAND FOR:
HEALTH IS A HUMAN RIGHT**

Countless people all over the world do not have access to healthy living conditions and proper health care. Even in Germany, some parts of the population are excluded from the regular health system. Ärzte der Welt (Doctors of the World) are committed to helping people assert their right to health – through political and medical aid.



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