

Family Healthcare Services You'll Need

BY CHRISTEL GOMES

Looking for a trusted healthcare practitioner in a new country can be stressful. Happily, Singapore's medical facilities and standards rival any in the world. Here are two go-to clinics that provide commonly needed healthcare services for the whole family.

FOR THE KIDS



Vaccinations

If you're a family with young children, finding a one stop family-friendly clinic to keep you on track with immunisation is likely to be high up on your list of priorities. Different countries have different immunisation requirements for school-going children, and in Singapore, immunisation against diphtheria and measles are compulsory by law, explains DR MARIA TANG of **Complete Healthcare International**.

For children born in Singapore

If your child was born in Singapore, certain vaccines would have been given

at birth along with a Health Booklet that includes the immunisation schedule to be followed. This book must be updated every time your child has a vaccine or booster shot.

"The National Immunisation Registry (NIR) in Singapore monitors and ensures that each child receives their vaccines at the appropriate time, and reminds parents when vaccinations are due," says Dr Tang. "The NIR maintains the immunisation records for all Singapore residents aged up to 18 years."

Just arrived?

If you've only just moved to Singapore, be aware that your child's primary school will ask for immunisation records – a requirement at many international schools, too – to demonstrate that he or she has had all the required vaccinations.

This strict policy serves to protect other children your child will come into contact with. "If enough children are immunised against a particular disease, the risk of it spreading is low, and the disease may be eradicated altogether," says Dr Tang.

Missed vaccinations?

If you're wondering whether you've missed any of the required vaccinations, simply bring your child to a family doctor, who will be able to advise what he or she needs in order to catch up.

While only immunisation for diphtheria and measles is compulsory by law, the National Childhood Immunisation Programme (NCIP) in Singapore offers vaccinations against tuberculosis, hepatitis B, pertussis (whooping cough), tetanus, polio, mumps and rubella (German measles).

Further to that, clinics such as Complete Healthcare International recommend and provide vaccinations for other diseases that are preventable with childhood immunisation, such as pneumococcus (the bacteria that causes pneumonia and meningitis), rotavirus, varicella (chickenpox), hepatitis A, human papillomavirus (HPV, which can cause various cancers) and haemophilus influenzae b (Hib).

Cost

For expats, the cost of these vaccinations varies according to the clinic you approach. Dr Tang advises to call for the prices, and also to check if your insurance policy covers them; this may be the case, as a certain ones are compulsory.





Prices for basic services vary depending on where you go; polyclinics are the cheapest option, but waiting times are long and you'll need to book well in advance. If you're willing to spend more, a private practice will be hassle-free and quicker. An online search for price comparison will help if you're new to the country. At Aesthete Smilestudio, the price for a consultation and examination stands at \$98, while scaling and polishing is \$138 and fluoride application \$48.

Inlays & Onlays

Another popular service is the application of aesthetic inlays and onlays to replace old fillings. Inlays and onlays are durable, tooth-coloured restorations that repair partially broken and worn teeth without the need for a crown. "More tooth structure can be conserved, and the nerve can be protected better with less grinding of the tooth," says Dr Thean. "Inlays and onlays are frequently used to replace metal fillings (dental amalgams)."

Typically, at your first appointment the tooth is prepared for the inlay or onlay. Another appointment will be required a week later to cement the inlay or onlay to the tooth with resin. "Laboratory-pressed inlays and onlays are superior to the same-day variety in terms of strength, fit, colour and durability," says Dr Thean.

Cost

Expect to pay between \$1,000 and \$1,500 for this type of restoration; your medical insurance company may cover the treatment.



Invisible Braces

Another number you'll want on speedial is the dentist, especially if you have children. The need for orthodontic correction ranks high among childhood dental problems, and most practices have metal and ceramic brace options available. But if you have a child who is worried about how braces will look, or about being teased, Invisalign is an option to explore.

According to DR THEAN TSIN PIAO of **Aesthete Smilestudio**, Invisalign invisible braces are not only visually undetectable in the mouth, but are more comfortable than traditional braces. "They can be programmed to move each tooth in any direction," he says, "giving dentists more options to deal with teeth misalignment compared to traditional wire and bracket braces technology."

Discomfort is also "negligible" as compared to braces. "If there is any soreness, it's generally confined to when you're changing to new aligners, and it usually only lasts for a couple of hours," he adds.

Invisalign can be used as soon as all your child's permanent teeth have erupted, which is usually by the time they turn 15. "We discourage kids from starting too early, so as to prevent the clinical fatigue and loss of motivation that can result from an overly long treatment process," says Dr Thean.

What to expect

As for what to expect during the process, the first appointment is generally spent taking moulds, models and photographs,

while the second appointment is to discuss and confirm the virtual treatment plan. The actual treatment begins at the third appointment. According to Dr Thean, the interval between review appointments can be set between four and eight weeks.

Cost

Invisalign treatment costs \$10,000, whether you're an expat or a Singaporean. "The initial deposit is \$2,000, and the balance is payable once you've confirmed the virtual treatment plan. Some insurance providers cover orthodontics, so be sure to check with your particular provider," says Dr Thean.



FOR MUMS AND DADS

Dental checkups, inlays and onlays

Even if your children are lucky enough not to have any major orthodontic issues, the family will still need a go-to dentist for regular checks and the usual scaling and polishing.



Nutritional Medicine

If you often feel a bit under the weather, suffer from cramps or feel bloated without being sure of what's wrong with you, you may benefit greatly from some nutritional medicine advice.

“What’s that?” you may ask. Well, it’s all based on Hippocrates’ edict from well over two millennia ago, “Let food be thy medicine, and medicine be thy food.” In other words, for your body to function optimally, the right nutrients and micronutrients are needed in the right amounts, and nutritional medicine attempts to address this.

According to DR COLIN KOH of **Complete Healthcare International**, people who come for a consultation

often complain of “vague symptoms of fatigue, decreased mental performance, abdominal bloating or cramping.” He adds that this is often after they’ve gone for conventional medical testing and been told that they’re healthy.

You can expect your nutrition consultant to take detailed notes of your medical history during your consultation. He or she will also conduct a series of tests that may include blood and stool testing; through these, certain nutritional deficiencies, food intolerances or imbalances in gut micro-organisms can be detected. Dr Koh explains that imbalances of this kind are especially common today, because of the widespread use and misuse of antibiotics.

Nutritional medicine has also been found to be helpful in treating certain endocrine and metabolism disorders. “These include perimenopause, thyroid disease and allergies; plus autoimmune diseases that can affect the skin and lungs, such as eczema and asthma; and mental and behavioural disorders like anxiety. It also helps in the management of accumulated toxic substances,” adds Dr Koh. *✎*

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