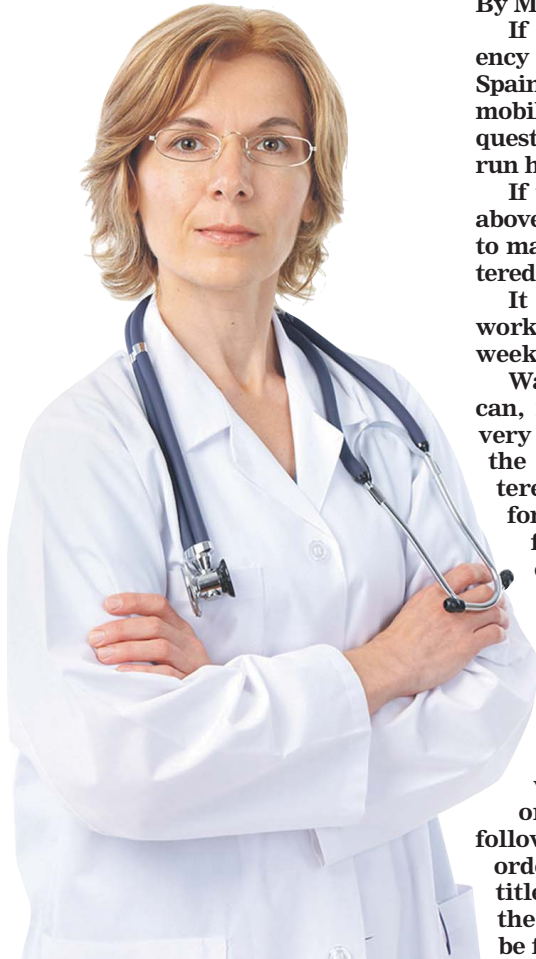


Accessing healthcare in Spain



By Martyn Standing

If you find yourself in an emergency situation during your stay in Spain, dial 112 from any telephone or mobile phone free of charge and request to be taken to the nearest state-run hospital by a public ambulance.

If there is one thing you should do above all else on arrival in Spain, it is to make sure you are correctly registered on the Spanish health system.

It is not like the UK - the paperwork could take at least a couple of weeks to sort out.

Waiting until you need a doctor can, in the worst cases, result in a very large bill. Make sure you start the process to get yourself registered today. For further information, check out information from the Department of Health on the following websites: www.gov.uk/healthcare-in-spain and www.healthcarein-spain.eu.

Below, we have listed the different ways in which you can access healthcare, whether you're living in Spain or just visiting. Please read the following information carefully in order to be fully aware of your entitlements. Contact details for all the organisations mentioned can be found at the end of the article.



If you live in Spain...

■ Working in Spain

British people working in Spain with a Spanish contract should be making Spanish social security contributions and as such will have a Spanish social security number.

With that number, they can register with their local medical centre and obtain a health card, known as a Tarjeta Sanitaria. Registration through the national social security system provides entitlement to state-provided healthcare on the same basis as a Spanish national.

Any dependants must be registered with the local Spanish social security office (Instituto Nacional de la Seguridad Social - INSS). Please visit www.seg-social.es for more information.

■ If you are in receipt of a UK state pension/benefit

Under European Regulations, if you are resident in Spain and in receipt of a UK state pension or other exportable benefits, such as long-term Employment & Support Allowance or Bereavement Benefit you will usually be covered for healthcare by the UK.

If this is the case, you will be entitled to access public healthcare in Spain by applying for an S1 form (previously E121) from the International Pension Centre (IPC).

If you are in receipt of other benefits, such as Disability Living Allowance or Carer's Allowance, you should check with the office that pays your benefit about healthcare entitlements.

Similarly, if you get a pension or benefit from more than one EEA country, speak with the so-

cial security department paying your pensions to see which country is responsible for issuing you with your S1 form.

Once you have obtained your S1 form, it will need to be registered at your local INSS office. The S1 form will provide you with the same medical cover in Spain as a Spanish national under the state-run health system, including treatment for any pre-existing conditions and repeat prescriptions. Please visit www.seg-social.es for a list of INSS offices.

■ How to register an S1 form

You will need to register the S1 form by presenting the following documentation at your local INSS office:

Certificate of national residency in Spain (Certificado de Residencia / Número de Identificación Extranjero - NIE), available from your nearest National Police station.

- Certificate of local residency (Certificado de Empadronamiento), available from your local town hall.

- You will also need to show a valid passport when registering your forms*.

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