Danish doctors and hospitals
Confidentiality
Your own doctor or the hospital personnel are not allowed to tell others what you have talked to them about—not even your own husband/wife, children or other members of your family. It is called confidentiality. It is you who decide who should be informed about your health. You have to say “yes” before information about your health may be passed on to others. This means that you are completely safe and secure and that there is no reason to be afraid to talk about yourself and your health with doctors and nurses.

Health card (National Health Insurance Card)
The municipality issues health cards to everybody with permanent residence in Denmark. Everybody with a health card can receive treatment by doctors and at hospitals. You must show your health card every time you go to the doctor or the hospital. Most examinations and treatments at the doctor are free of charge.

In Denmark, everybody who becomes acutely ill is entitled to free treatment at a hospital. This also applies to visitors from other countries.
**Interpreter**

It is crucial that the doctor and the staff at the hospital are able to understand what you are telling them. If you do not speak or understand Danish, the surgery or hospital staff can call in an interpreter to assist you. It is the surgery or hospital staff that takes care of this.

If you need an interpreter at an appointment with a doctor, midwife or visiting nurse, you must say so when you make the appointment. You will not have to pay for the interpreter.

Interpreters are professionals, and they are not allowed to pass on to others what they learn as interpreters. You should not bring a person from your family as an interpreter. The person in your family has a lot of feelings for you and consequently maybe unable to listen properly. The person in your family may not know medical words and medical terminology and will therefore be unable to give you an exact translation of what the doctor says.

**General practitioners**

When you live in Denmark, you choose your own personal general practitioner (GP). When you fall ill, you can call or visit this GP. The GP can also vaccinate you and can inform women about birth control. If you have problems with overweight or if you smoke too much, you can always talk to your GP about it. Sometimes, a GP will ask you questions that may surprise you. That is because the GP would like you to think about what you can do yourself to avoid becoming ill. You can, for example, eat less sugar and do more exercise. It is important that you look after your body.

The GP will always provide you with the treatment and medicine you need.

Most people have the same GP for many years. This is good, as the GP will get to know you and your family well. The GP will also be aware of diseases, which run in the family.

Your own GP knows all the most common diseases. The GP is a specialist in common diseases. Therefore, the GP can help you with most diseases you have and provide you with treatment or medicine. In some cases, the GP will refer you to a specialist doctor or hospital. You will be examined and perhaps receive medicine or treatment.

The name, address and telephone number of your GP is written on your health card. Many GPs’ surgeries are open between 8 am and 4 pm on weekdays and one evening a week. Normally, you can telephone your GP between 8 am and 9 am.

You must make an appointment before seeing the GP. You cannot just show up at the surgery. Please remember to telephone the doctor and cancel any appointments you cannot keep.

When you move, you can get a new GP and it is free. You may also change your GP if you wish, but it will cost you DKK 150. Read more at www.borger.dk.
Prescriptions and medicine
The GP will write a prescription for you when you need medicine. Prescription medicine can only be purchased at a pharmacy. Painkillers and certain other types of medicine can be purchased without prescription at supermarkets, in Matas or at the pharmacy.

Specialist doctors
A specialist doctor is a specialist in, for example, skin diseases or gynaecology. Your own GP will examine you and decide whether to refer you to a new examination with a specialist doctor. Your GP will write a letter to you. It is called a referral to the specialist doctor. Usually, your GP will give you the name of a good specialist doctor. However, you are also free to choose another specialist doctor. You must call and make the appointment with the specialist yourself. Eye specialists and ear, nose and throat specialists are specialist doctors whom you can always call to make an appointment, without prior referral from your GP.

Out-of-hours services
You can telephone the out-of-hours service if you fall ill and your own GP’s surgery is closed. You should only call if you are very ill and if you cannot wait until you can get into contact with your own GP. The out-of-hours doctor can write a prescription for you or send you to a hospital. The out-of-hours doctor may conclude that you are not very ill. The out-of-hours doctor will then tell you to contact your own GP within office hours.

In most cases, you will have to go to a treatment centre yourself to see an out-of-hours doctor. You may have to wait for a while in the waiting room, as the treatment centres are generally very busy. The out-of-hours service is open from 5 pm to 8 am from Monday to Friday. In weekends and on national holidays, they are open 24 hours a day.
Alarm 112

112 is an alarm centre. You should call 112 if you need an ambulance. You should call if you experience an accident. You should call 112 if a person suddenly becomes very ill or is unconscious. You must always state your name, explain what has happened, when it happened and where you are calling from.

Emergency rooms

An emergency room is for persons who have been in an accident or for persons who fall acutely ill and cannot be treated by their own GP. You can go to an emergency room if, for example, you have broken a finger. You have to go to the emergency room within 24 hours of your accident. Emergency rooms are generally very busy and the persons who are most ill or have the worst injuries are treated first. You may therefore have to wait for a while in the waiting room before a doctor has time to see you. Sometimes, you may have to wait for 2-3 hours. The emergency rooms are situated at the hospitals, and at some hospitals you have to telephone the emergency room in advance before you go there.

Psychiatric emergency room

Psychiatric emergency rooms are for people with severe mental problems who need immediate help. Persons who have had bad thoughts or who have been very sad for a long time. You can telephone an emergency room or go there directly.
**Hospitals**

If you need examination or treatment at a hospital, you must first have a referral from your GP, a specialist doctor or an out-of-hours doctor. The hospital will send you a letter explaining where to go and when. The letter will also explain whether there is anything special you must do before you go to the hospital, for example, that you cannot eat or drink for a certain period of time. If you become ill very suddenly you will of course be admitted to the hospital at once.

Many hospitals have booklets in different languages. Here you can read about hospital rules and the rights of patients. If you are not able to speak proper Danish, an interpreter can assist you. At the hospital you can talk to a patient counsellor. A patient counsellor is a person who can help you with many things, for example, explain the various types of treatment to you or give you information about the possibility of being treated at another hospital. You can also talk to the patient counsellor if there is something you do not understand, or if you want to file a complaint about something. Patient counsellors are also bound by a duty of professional confidentiality. So they are not allowed to pass on to others what they have heard from you.

**Pregnancy**

Pregnant women have a right to be examined by their own GP and a midwife several times during their pregnancy. You will also be offered a number of hospital examinations, for example, ultrasound scans. At the hospital examinations the doctors check whether you and the baby are alright. It is important to discover any problems as early as possible in your pregnancy. You are welcome to bring along your husband or another person for these examinations.

**Your GP**

The first examination during your pregnancy is performed by your GP. You must make an appointment yourself when you have become pregnant. The GP will examine you and create a maternity record (some papers) that you must bring along at all subsequent appointments. Your doctor and midwife will enter information into your record about the progress of your baby and the examinations you have undergone. The GP will also ask you about your eating habits, whether you smoke and about any diseases that may run in your family.

**Midwife**

Your GP will notify a midwife about your pregnancy. The midwife will then send you a letter telling you where and when your first examination will take place. You must bring along a urine sample (pee in a container). You should also bring along your maternity record (your papers from the GP) for all examinations. The midwife will talk to you about your health and wellbeing. She will test your urine sample, examine your abdomen and listen to your baby’s heartbeat.

**Childbirth**

Together with your GP, you decide at which hospital you want to give birth to your child. Which hospital that suits you the best. You may also give birth at home with the assistance of a midwife.

**Abortion**

In Denmark, all women have a right to choose an abortion at a hospital but it must take place within the first twelve weeks of pregnancy. It is up to each woman personally to decide whether she wants an abortion or whether she wants to give birth to her child. If she wants an abortion, she must contact her own GP who will then refer her to a hospital.
Preventive screenings for cervical cancer and breast cancer

Every three years all women aged between 23 and 59 receive a letter offering them a screening for cervical cancer. You will be examined by your own GP. At the examination, the GP can discover cancer. If the GP discovers cancer early on, there is a good chance of recovery. When you receive the letter, you must telephone your GP and make an appointment.

In some areas of Denmark women between 50 and 69 years of age are offered an X-ray of their breasts every two years. Such an examination is called a mammography. The women in those areas receive a letter stating the date, time and place of the examination.

Gynaecological examinations – problems with the feminine abdomen

If you are a woman and have problems with your abdomen you should have an examination by your GP. The examination is called a gynaecological examination. If you have special problems with your abdomen your GP will refer you to a gynaecologist (a doctor specialised in female diseases).

Health checks of children

Health visitor

A health visitor is a nurse specialising in the health of children. She will also look into whether the family is in good health and wellbeing. A health visitor will visit you in your home when your child has been born. She will examine your child and she will answer questions you may have about, for example, breastfeeding and contraceptives. She will visit you several times until your child reaches the age of two. She will follow the growth of your child, and she will measure and weigh the child. Her wish is to see that the child and the family are doing well.

The health visitor can set up groups of mothers who have given birth to their babies at approximately the same time. They are called mothers’ groups. In the mothers’ group you can meet other women who live in the neighbourhood. You can talk to the other women about your child and about how it is to be a mother and how you are doing in the family.

You can ask to have an interpreter present at the health visitor’s calls at your home.

Health checks and vaccinations of your child

All children have the right to be examined and vaccinated by a doctor free of charge. The first examination will usually take place when your child is five weeks old. The doctor will measure and weigh your child and check that he or she is in good health and develops normally. The child will have his or her first vaccination at the age of three months. The vaccinations protect your child against several different serious diseases.

You must make your own appointments with your GP to have your child examined and vaccinated. The health visitor will give you a booklet with information as to when your child should be examined and vaccinated.

Health visitor is a nurse specialising in the health of children. She will also look into whether the family is in good health and wellbeing. A health visitor will visit you in your home when your child has been born. She will examine your child and she will answer questions you may have about, for example, breastfeeding and contraceptives. She will visit you several times until your child reaches the age of two. She will follow the growth of your child, and she will measure and weigh the child. Her wish is to see that the child and the family are doing well.

The health visitor can set up groups of mothers who have given birth to their babies at approximately the same time. They are called mothers’ groups. In the mothers’ group you can meet other women who live in the neighbourhood. You can talk to the other women about your child and about how it is to be a mother and how you are doing in the family.

You can ask to have an interpreter present at the health visitor’s calls at your home.
Health checks at school
When your child starts school, a municipal doctor and nurse will examine him or her. The doctor will check your child to see whether he or she is in good health and is growing normally. The doctor will usually examine the children in preschool (class 0) and in their last year of school. The school nurse will examine your children many times. She will examine the eyes and the ears, and she will measure and weigh your child.

If you child has problems at school you can talk to the school psychologist about them.

Paediatric dentist (child dentist)
All children in Denmark can go to the dentist free of charge until they reach the age of 18. Your child will see a dentist for the first time at the age of two. You will receive an invitation by letter. If your child has problems with their teeth before the age of two, you are welcome to contact one of the municipality's paediatric dentists. You can ask your health visitor for more information.

When your child starts school, he or she will automatically be given appointments with the school dentist.

Help and care in your own home provided by the municipality

In Denmark, it is the municipality's personnel that look after elderly people. Elderly people can receive help with many things when they live at home. Maybe the family cannot help the elderly people all the time. Therefore, elderly people can usually receive help from the municipality.

District nurse
Elderly people can receive help to take their medicine. They can also receive help to get out of bed, with personal hygiene and getting dressed. You can receive the same help if you are very ill. A doctor will decide whether you need the services of a nurse in your home.

Home Help
Elderly people can apply for help with cleaning and grocery shopping. They can also apply for help with personal hygiene and with getting dressed. You can also receive this kind of help if you are very ill. Ask your municipality if you need help.

When you have been in hospital, you may still be ill or weak when you return to your own home. You might need some help. The hospital will contact your municipality if you need help. Perhaps an assistant nurse or a district nurse will come and help you.
All information is based on how Danish doctors and hospitals are organised by January 1, 2012.

The booklet is published by
The University of Copenhagen
Faculty of Health Sciences
Department of Public Health
Section for Health Services Research
Danish Research Centre for Migration, Ethnicity and Health