Healthcare

Election Issue 2026

Medicines, medical treatments and surgeries in NZ are increasingly expensive with uneven access in the time needed for best outcomes, often falling behind what is offered in other countries. Medical facilities are often underfunded and understaffed.

History shows Christians have been pivotal in providing and championing healthcare for their communities for centuries. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are asked to have compassion and care for people who are unwell, disabled or disadvantaged. And here in NZ we need to ensure that health policies and funding aim for every New Zealander to receive best-practice medical care, not just enough to survive but for people to flourish.

Below you'll find some information about this issue, as well as some accompanying questions, which could be asked of candidates in your electorate.

Patient costs and wait times

GPs: From 2024 data, NZ was short of just under 500 GPs[1], with 5% of people not able to enrol with a GP[2], a third of people having to wait more than 2 weeks to see a GP, and things have not improved. While children are usually free, people without a community services card over 14yrs old will pay $50-$85 for a GP consultation if they are enrolled, and $85-$145 if they are an unenrolled/casual patient.
How would you make sure everyone can enrol and afford to see a GP?

Surgery and specialists wait times are long, with waiting lists difficult to get onto depending on the surgery (knee and hip replacements, colonoscopies, ENT surgeries all have long wait times) and patient location.
What is your plan to reduce wait times on surgery lists?

Staff to patient and hospital beds to patient ratios for the NZ population are well below those of other OECD countries[3]. These ratios worsen wait times, health outcomes for patients, and working conditions for health workers.
What are your plans to fund and increase staffing and hospital facilities?

Dental care is currently not included in the publicly-funded health system apart from basic care for under 18 year olds. Currently almost half of NZ adults avoid regular dental care due to cost[4].
How would you improve financial access to dental care? Would you consider initiatives for public, universal dental care?

NZ's medicine investment is often slow to fund new or better medicines that people cannot afford to pay for privately[5].
How would you improve access to new medicines?

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[1] NZ almost 500 GPs short, briefing reveals | Stuff
[2] New Zealand critically short of general practitioners, 250,000 Kiwis can't access community healthcare | Stuff
[3] Harnessing digital tools to improve health system performance: OECD Economic Surveys: New Zealand 2026 | OECD
[4] Pacific.scoop.co.nz » Too Expensive To Smile: Calls Grow For Universal, Te Tiriti-Consistent Dental Care
[5] Australia funding more medicines faster than Aotearoa, report finds | RNZ

Health outcomes are not equitable for all geographic areas and for all communities in NZ

Where you live geographically can determine your access to a GP, to tests such as scans and Xrays, to treatments such as dialysis and chemotherapy, and to hospitals. Thresholds for waiting lists and funding subsidies, as well as access to maternity/palliative care/emergency services are worse in rural areas[6].
What will you do first to ensure access to healthcare no matter where you live?

Māori and Pasifika people in NZ have a shorter life expectancy and higher mortality rate than the whole population not linked solely to poverty or lifestyle. Equitable access does not always result in equitable outcomes[7].
What is your commitment to equitable health outcomes for Māori, including using Māori-led solutions?

Social demographics such as language, culture and immigration status can impede access to and trust in medical care[8].
What would you do to lessen these non-physical access barriers?

People with disabilities in NZ make up 17-25% of our population. However, a 2023 report[9] shows that poorer health outcomes and systemic barriers exist for those with disabilities, that include maternity care, transition from youth to adult healthcare, and elderly healthcare. Disabled people in NZ have a higher mortality rate from treatable conditions than people with no disability.
What would you put in place to increase effective, accessible, affordable healthcare for people with disabilities?

Mental healthcare in NZ is struggling to keep up with increasing psychological distress in young people, and culturally-appropriate care for Māori[10]. Suicide rates are still among the highest in OECD countries, especially for young people and Māori[11].
What is your response to the ongoing mental health crisis in NZ?

NZ health connection with the world

Drug security in New Zealand may be vulnerable to world events such as war, fuel shortage and trade tariff changes. We experienced this during the Covid pandemic where some basic drugs were in short supply and there was a queue of countries for PEP and vaccines. While currently England is experiencing drug shortages due to the Iran War and blocking of the Strait of Hormuz, New Zealand could easily face similar shortages.
What would your party do to protect future drug security here in NZ?

Pandemic preparedness for NZ as well as other countries since the Covid pandemic has been urgent[12]. Earlier this year, the NZ Government rejected WHO amendments to global pandemic regulations that aimed to improve inter-country communication and coordination during a pandemic.[13]
What is your party policy for future pandemic preparedness in NZ?

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[6] The health gap: How living in the regions can be bad for your health | Stuff
[7] https://shorthand.radionz.co.nz/maori-health-racism/index.html
[8] #hauora: Health System Failing Disabled New Zealanders, New Report Reveals - Waatea News: Māori Radio Station
[9] https://www.hqsc.govt.nz/news-and-events/disability-data-gaps/
[10] https://www.mhwc.govt.nz/news-and-resources/mental-health-system-still-falling-short-for-young-people-and-maori-new-report-shows/
[11] https://www.humanium.org/en/youth-mental-health-crisis-and-rising-suicide-rates-in-new-zealand/
[12] WHO-linked report warns world more at risk of pandemic now than before Covid | RNZ
[13] NZ's rejection of new WHO pandemic rules makes no real sense | RNZ