

Healthcare in Colombia



Colombia takes healthcare seriously and makes it easy for foreign residents to get coverage. Costs are so reasonable that many young, healthy expats pay cash for services. Those who choose to get coverage pay an affordable premium, low copayments, and receive top-quality care for their money. In fact, Colombia has the best healthcare system in Latin America. Twenty-six of the top 63 hospitals in Latin America are located in Colombia. Four of these have received accreditation from the Joint Commission International, the gold standard of care.

If you obtain a visa that allows you to stay in Colombia for more than 180 days, you can qualify for entry into the healthcare system. Immigration will require you to get a Colombian identification card, known as a *cédula*.

Once you receive a *cédula*, you can apply for coverage at the office of any health insurance provider. There is no maximum age to qualify for the public health plan known as *EPS* (*Entidades Promotoras de Salud*). You only need to fill out an application, give them a photocopy of your *cédula*, along with copies of the *cédulas* of any beneficiaries you'd like to add. The system has no waiting period, so you're free to seek medical attention as soon as your provider enters you into the nationwide database.

Providers do not issue you an insurance card. Your identification remains tied to your *cédula* number. Most doctors and dentists require you to bring a photocopy of your *cédula* each time you visit them. If you need care while traveling in Colombia, the medical staff at any hospital or clinic can find you in the system using your *cédula* number.