

# Traveling to Japan for medical treatment

## 3 reasons for choosing travel to Japan for medical treatment

### High quality of medical care

In Japan, state-of-the-art medical services are provided by medical staff with specialist knowledge and skills. Patients have highly rated the quality of the medical treatment they received in Japan.

### Ease of traveling to Japan

Japan is considered easy to travel to from various perspectives, including availability of other options besides air travel, the short time taken and low travel costs.

### Feeling of security about the country/region

In addition to Japan's worldwide reputation for safety, its cultural affinity with other Asian countries also makes it easy for Asian people to travel to and receive medical care in Japan with peace of mind.

## Flow of travel to Japan

### Beginning travel preparations



Travel to Japan for medical treatment involves many procedures, such as contacting medical institutions and obtaining a medical stay visa. Therefore, it is advisable to consult an international medical coordination provider and receive their support, which can reduce the burden. For the consultation, you should have information ready, which includes current medical condition, medical history (e.g. medical reports and images), preferred medical institutions, budget, and desired date of travel to Japan.

### Coordinating with medical institutions



Inquiries to the medical institution in Japan are made via an international medical coordination provider. The medical institution will provide the international medical coordination provider with detailed information such as the possibility of acceptance, treatment details, duration, and costs. Based on such information, you can adjust your stay.

\*Please note that inquiries to medical institutions may be charged as a second opinion.

\*It may take about 2 weeks from the time of inquiry to receive a response from the medical institution, so allow ample time when making your arrangements.

### Advance payment of estimated costs



The international medical coordination provider will pay treatment costs to the medical institution on your behalf. In order to reduce financial concerns and travel to Japan with peace of mind, it is generally recommended that you complete the advance payment of the estimated costs with the above adjustment to the international medical coordination provider. If the actual treatment costs are less than those estimated, the difference will be refunded. If the actual treatment cost is more than the estimated treatment cost, you will need to make an additional payment for the difference while you are in Japan. Be sure to confirm in advance how refunds and additional payments will be made.

### Visa arrangements



A visa is required for entry to Japan. If you do not have a medical stay visa, you can consult an international medical coordination provider which can assist in obtaining one. If you already have a visa, check its validity and the duration of stay allowed.



### Travel to Japan, treatment

An international medical coordination provider can assist you with transportation and other arrangements for your trip to Japan. Since support during hospitalization is also provided by the international medical coordination provider and medical institution, you will need very few people to accompany you.



### Billing of medical expenses

Based on the estimated medical expenses paid to the international medical coordination provider prior to your visit to Japan, the actual cost will be calculated after treatment. Therefore, no payments to the medical institution will normally be required. The expenses will include not only the cost of examinations and treatment at the hospital but also the cost of interpretation and translation.



### Follow-up after returning home

After receiving treatment in Japan, appropriate follow-up should be provided by the attending doctor in your country. In addition, send your medical condition and test results to the international medical coordination provider on a regular basis, and have them checked by a doctor in a Japanese hospital.

## Frequently asked questions

### Q What are the benefits of receiving treatment in Japan?

A In Japan, highly specialized, skilled medical staff work together in providing state-of-the-art medical services, including before and after treatment.

#### Comments made by Chinese patients who received treatment in Japan:



I was advised by a local hospital not to have surgery because of the strain on my body, but on hearing from an acquaintance that surgery could be possible at Japanese hospital with a good track record, I considered going to Japan.



I was impressed by advice from medical professionals before leaving the hospital, such as medication guidance by a pharmacist and dietary guidance by a nutritionist, with a view to life after returning home.

### Q Can I travel to Japan to receive treatment even if I have a medical condition?

A Up to now, many patients have traveled to Japan and received treatment. Patients who have been to Japan for this purpose have said that it is an easy country to travel to, because it is possible to travel not only by plane but also by ship, the time taken is short, and cost of transportation is low.

### Q Can you feel secure in receiving treatment in Japan even if you can't speak Japanese?

A As support matched to the needs of patients for treatment and the stay in Japan can be arranged, your stay in Japan can be free of language or other concerns. For example, for the trip to Japan, the international medical coordination provider can arrange airport transfers, support for the hotel check-in and transportation to and from the hospital. Medical interpreters can be arranged to provide any necessary interpretation in the hospital at the time of treatment.

### Q About how long will it take for medical stay visa procedures and other preparations for travel?

A In view of the time taken for medical stay visa procedures and for preparation for receiving medical institution(s), approximately 1 to 2 months of travel preparation is required. Many patients receive assistance from an international medical coordination provider or other organizations for provision of medical information for the decision of a medical institution on acceptance and medical visa applications.

### Q How can I find out more about traveling to Japan for medical treatment?

A Please refer to the "Travel Flow" at the top of this page for the general flow from consideration to medical travel and return home. To obtain more details, why don't you start contacting an international medical coordination provider to discuss your travel needs?

## Beginning travel preparations

### What is an international medical coordination provider?

An international medical coordination provider refers to an organization that provides medical coordination services to people wishing to receive medical care services in Japan. This includes matching to accepting medical institutions, paying the fees for receiving medical services on the behalf of patients, providing interpreters and other support related to acceptance. For foreign patients residing in other countries who desire treatment at a Japanese medical institution, entrusting arrangements for acceptance by a medical institution to an international medical coordination provider is the easiest way to ensure that medical treatment is received smoothly. By establishing guidelines that international medical coordination providers should adhere to, International Medical Coordinator Companies Association Japan (JIMCA) aims to provide an environment in which foreign patients visiting Japan can undergo treatment safely. Consult JIMCA if you do not know which provider to contact.

### Is it easy to travel to Japan?

When going to another country to receive medical services, it is necessary to anticipate the possibility that treatment may be prolonged and that multiple trips may be required for follow-up after the treatment. By choosing an easily accessible location as a destination, flexible treatment planning is possible, allowing traveling to and from the hospital as required. Japan is not only close to Southeast Asia in terms of distance, but also has many international airports in all regions, making domestic travel relatively easy. Therefore, it is possible to set up a travel and treatment schedule that suits your convenience by consulting with medical institutions through an international medical coordination provider. For instance, in the case of treatment for cancer, it will be possible to select the option of returning to the patient's home country between the end of a course of chemotherapy and the beginning of the next one.

## Advance payment of estimated costs

### Is there anything I should be aware of when paying in advance?

- The estimated costs include estimated treatment costs presented by the medical institution as well as the fees of the international medical coordination provider, and all of this needs to be paid together.
- Please be aware that it may take some time to confirm a remittance.
- In some countries, banks may require additional documents at the time of remittance, so please check in advance.

## Visa arrangements

### What is a medical stay visa?

A visa is generally required for entry to Japan (However, citizens of visa-exempt countries may not require a visa when entering Japan). A medical stay visa is one issued to a foreign patient to visit Japan for the purpose of medical treatment at a Japanese medical institution and any accompanying person(s) (includes comprehensive health check-ups, regular health check-ups, tests, dental treatment and hot spring therapy or other convalescent therapy). When a foreign patient and any accompanying person(s) apply for a medical stay visa, a guarantee for the visa will be required from a guarantor organization. An international medical coordination provider can carry out the procedures for this if it is one registered as a guarantor organization. Normally, the permitted length of stay is 90 days or less. For short-term stays, the number of days within 90 days is usually specified as the period of stay on the entry permit affixed to the passport. As it will be necessary to leave Japan by the date indicated on the entry permit, if you wish to visit a medical institution in Japan, please confirm in advance whether you will be able to complete your treatment and return to your country within the period of stay.

### How long does it take to obtain a medical stay visa?

It takes at least 2 weeks to obtain a medical stay visa from the time that the international medical coordination provider has received your full medical information. We recommend planning a trip to Japan 1-2 months in the future in consideration of arranging the timing of acceptance at the medical institution. If you require treatment urgently, please consider starting treatment in your own country and then continuing it in Japan.

## Travel to Japan, treatment

### Can I stay in Japan without safety concerns?

Safety in Japan is highly rated worldwide, particularly with regard to healthcare and health security, and an environment in which patients can feel secure in coming to Japan for treatment is in place. For example, in the Safe Cities Index 2021, Tokyo ranked 5th in overall score, and Tokyo and Osaka ranked 1st and 5th, respectively, in the category of Health Security (safety of medical and health environment), which are very high among 60 cities worldwide.

## What kind of arrangements should be made for consultation at a Japanese hospital with regard to language and other needs?

During the stay in Japan, the international medical coordination provider can assist with language and other needs. For instance, airport pick-up, hotel check-in support, and hospital transfers can be arranged. A medical interpreter can also be provided during treatment. If 24-hour care should be required after surgery, medical interpreter(s) can be available around the clock.

\*Since the necessity of interpreters is determined by the doctor or the hospital, the patient will need to discuss with the hospital regarding the dispatch of medical interpreter(s) by consulting the coordinator. Medical interpretation charges will be billed according to the hours actually worked based on an hourly rate. Since rates will be determined by each coordination provider, please check this beforehand.

\*Please keep in mind that few hospitals have doctors or nurses who can directly communicate in languages other than Japanese.

## Are there any points to keep in mind when receiving treatment at hospital in Japan?

- As a rule, hospital staff take care of patients during hospitalization in Japanese medical institutions, so the number of accompanying persons should be kept to a minimum. Children needing to be looked after should not be brought to the hospital.
- Even if you have an appointment, consultation may not be at the scheduled time for the appointment since priority may be given to emergency patients. Please anticipate the possibility of waiting time.
- Any information that was not disclosed to the hospital may be the cause of acceptance being suspended. Please be sure to submit all medical information to the hospital in Japan beforehand via the international medical coordination provider.
- The hospital will provide treatment for the disease you have consulted about in advance. After your arrival in Japan, please avoid consulting about other diseases. If there are several issues you wish to receive consultation for, the international medical coordination provider will make arrangements with medical institutions. In certain cases, arrangements can be made so you can receive treatment at several hospitals during the stay in Japan. Please let us know your wishes in advance.

## Billing of medical expenses

### When refunds or extra payments are necessary, how is this handled?

Once the treatment in Japan is completed, the international medical coordination provider will settle with the medical institution within the prepaid amount. When settling accounts, please ask the international medical coordination provider for evidence (proof of payment) for the actual medical expenses, such as invoices from the hospital.

If there is a balance on deposit after settlement, it will be refunded to the account from which payment was made. Please note that if you wish to have your deposit refunded to a different account, you may be required to provide documentation showing the relationship between the remittance source account holder and the other account holder.

In case expenses exceed the amount of the deposit (e.g., due to additional unplanned treatment) extra payment may be required. Be sure to receive a full explanation from the international medical coordination provider before proceeding with payment.

### Can insurance be applied?

If you have international medical insurance that covers medical treatment in Japan, you may be eligible for reimbursement of your treatment expenses at a later date. In addition to the bill from the Japanese medical institution, please submit the application form for your insurance coverage to the coordinator in advance, and be prepared to have the form filled out promptly after the treatment is completed. Also, since insurance may cover other expenses than medical expenses, such as interpreting charges and coordinator fees, you should check what is covered by the insurance you have taken out beforehand. Please be aware that it is illegal for a person residing outside of Japan to be covered by Japanese public health insurance for treatment in Japan.

## Reference information

- [Information on Visa for Medical Stay \(Ministry of Foreign Affairs website\)](#)
- [List of guarantor organizations for medical stay visa \(Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry-registered\)](#)
- [List of guarantor organizations for medical stay visa \(Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, Japan Tourism Agency-registered\)](#)
- [Japan Hospital Search \(Japan International Hospitals search\)](#)

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