



THE GROWTH BUDGET Factsheet

**BUDGET
2025**

New and improved urgent and after-hours healthcare

New Zealanders will benefit from faster and easier access to urgent care with up to 80 new and improved after-hours and urgent care services, following a \$164 million investment.

This major investment will ensure 98 per cent of New Zealanders can access urgent care within one hour's drive of their home – delivering on our Government's commitment to ensure that all Kiwis have access to timely, quality healthcare.

Key changes include:

- A new 24-hour urgent care service in Counties Manukau, providing around-the-clock care in one of New Zealand's fastest-growing regions.
- New 24/7 services in key provincial centres, including Whangārei, Palmerston North, and Dunedin.
- New daytime urgent care services identified in other provincial cities and towns, including in Lower Hutt, Invercargill and Timaru.
- Maintaining all existing urgent and after-hours healthcare services across the country.
- Rural and remote communities to benefit from up to 70 improved urgent and after-hours healthcare services.

These improvements are part of a comprehensive, community-based approach to strengthen urgent care, ease pressure on hospital emergency departments, and deliver better health outcomes for all New Zealanders.

Rural and remote communities will benefit from 24/7 on-call clinicians to support local care delivery; locally available diagnostic tests, so people don't have to travel long distances to ED just to rule out a serious condition; and access to medicines like antibiotics, ensuring patients can start treatment quickly and easily.

This initiative builds on earlier health workforce and primary care investments, including more training places for doctors and nurses in GP clinics, overseas recruitment, and 24/7 digital health services, as part of the Government's plan to put patients first and strengthen access to timely, quality healthcare.

Key implementation of new urban services across Health New Zealand regions

Region	Key new urban / small city services
Northern	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By late 2025: Counties Manukau 24/7 service• By mid-2027: Whangārei 24/7 service, builds on existing daytime service
Midland	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By mid-2026: Tauranga 24/7 service
Central	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By late 2025: Lower Hutt daytime service, building on existing after-hours service• By mid-2027: Palmerston North 24/7 service
South Island	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By late 2025: Dunedin 24/7 service• By mid-2026: Improved Invercargill service• By mid-2026: Improved Timaru service

Key stats and facts

Around 5000 New Zealanders use after-hours and urgent care services each day. Their access to care varies depending on where they live, with some people facing long wait times or drives to get care.

Urgent care is for health issues that need attention quickly but aren't life-threatening. It can be provided during or after regular hours, in clinics or via telehealth.

After-hours care is any care outside 8am–5pm on weekdays, including weekends and public holidays. Overnight care runs from 8pm to 8am.

About one third (450,000) of annual ED attendances are considered lower urgency (triage 4 and 5). Some of these patients are suitable for treatment through an urgent care centre service as an alternative to ED.

How patient experiences of care will improve

- It's early Monday morning and Tim, an Auckland Dad, has a 10 month-old with a fever. He calls Healthline and after he answers a few questions, they recommend his daughter is seen by a clinician. Tim can now take her to the new 24 hour clinic in Counties Manukau, avoiding a longer drive and a longer wait time at a busy ED.

- It's Saturday afternoon and Ngahuia, a Central Otago Mum, has severe abdominal pain. She calls Ka Ora digital health for an online consult. The GP recommends an in-person assessment from the new on-call service. Ngahuia travels to the local clinic where she is given an ultrasound which rules out a serious condition. She heads home with pain relief, having avoided the need for a 1 hour 45 minute ambulance ride to Dunedin Hospital and a long wait in an ED.
- It's Wednesday morning and 62-year-old Graham presents at a Tākaka clinic with chest pain. The nurse completes a Troponin test to check for heart damage and an electrocardiogram (ECG) is completed. Both show no signs of heart damage and there are no other serious symptoms. He goes home with advice on managing symptoms and when to seek further medical attention. Because the clinic now has access to an ECG and the Troponin test, Graham has avoided a minimum one hour wait for the ambulance to arrive, a 1 hour 40-minute drive to Nelson Hospital and an ED wait.
- It's Friday night in Northland and Jessie thinks she has a urinary tract infection (UTI). She calls Ka Ora digital health and gets an online GP appointment within 20 minutes. The GP prescribed an antibiotic. Instead of having to drive 1.5 hours to a pharmacy on Saturday morning, she picks up the medicine at a depot 20 minutes from her home.
- It's Sunday morning and Hoani falls from his horse in Raglan. PRIME¹ responds to the 111 call and diagnoses a suspected dislocated shoulder. The PRIME provider provides a consultation at the local medical centre in Raglan. The PRIME provider is now trained to x-ray limbs and confirms a fractured upper humerus. Hoani's arm is put into a sling, and he returns home with pain relief. Because the service can now locally perform x-rays of limbs, Hoani avoids a rescue helicopter visit, a lengthy wait for an x-ray at Waikato Hospital and the likely need to have found overnight accommodation.

How the initiative will be implemented

These changes will be rolled out over the next two years, with services tailored to the needs, size, and location of each community.

Across the country:

- Some areas will receive new urgent care services, including 24/7 clinics.
- Others will see extended hours, better access to diagnostics and medicines, or on-call clinician support.
- Five new 24/7 urgent care services will be established in major centres.
- Three new services will be set up in urban and smaller city locations.

¹ The PRIME (Primary Response in Medical Emergencies) service is a jointly commissioned project funded by MoH and ACC and administered by Hato Hone St John. It provides both the coordinated response and appropriate management of emergencies in rural locations.

To strengthen rural access, we're beginning with the first six rural and remote rollout teams in Twizel, Tākaka, Tūrangi, Te Kuiti, Coromandel, and Great Barrier Island, launching from mid-2025. These will test new ways of delivering urgent care in remote areas and help build a more sustainable rural model.

In each region, extended opening hours will start rolling out this year, where they're most needed.

Where possible, services will be delivered from existing clinics and trusted community locations, ensuring fast and familiar access for patients.

Health New Zealand will work closely with providers to develop local workforce plans that support recruitment and retention, especially in areas where staffing has been a long-standing challenge.

This approach will deliver more consistent, timely, quality urgent care for New Zealanders, no matter where they live.

Questions & Answers

Q. Will there be enough available workforce to support these new services?

The Government has already made significant investments to grow and strengthen the health workforce, and today's announcement builds on that momentum.

Health New Zealand's frontline workforce is the strongest it has ever been, with targeted workforce initiatives underway to help stabilise existing services and enable expansion into new areas. In many cases, this investment will ensure stronger, more resilient care teams right across the country.

To ensure these services are sustainable, we are phasing them in over time. This approach provides the necessary time to build and support the workforce.

Health New Zealand is working alongside ACC to support more flexible care delivery models, enabling a wider range of clinicians to provide timely and effective care.

Budget 2025 is also delivering on our commitment to grow the primary care workforce, including:

- Funding for up to 400 graduate nurses to work in general practice each year, with additional support for rural providers
- 120 additional nurse practitioner training places annually
- 90 internationally trained doctors supported into the GP workforce through a streamlined registration pathway
- 50 domestic medical graduates moving into an accelerated primary care pathway

Q. Workforce is a particular challenge in rural and provincial areas – are you confident you will be able to staff these clinics?

Many rural primary care providers – particularly those supported through PRIME – are already delivering 24/7 care. This investment will provide more sustainable funding and targeted support to help these clinicians continue delivering timely, quality healthcare in their communities.

Health New Zealand will work closely with rural urgent care providers to develop locally appropriate workforce models that support recruitment and retention. That includes:

- Expanding the use of interdisciplinary care teams (groups of different health professionals working together) in rural and remote locations, such as integrating paramedics into primary care.
- Improving connections to larger centres to ensure rural teams are well supported.
- Scaling up digital health and triage services to relieve pressure on in-person care.

This approach ensures rural and provincial New Zealanders have access to timely, quality urgent care, while supporting the workforce needed to deliver it – now and into the future.

Q. What infrastructure will be needed to establish these new clinics?

Where possible, new or improved urgent and after-hour healthcare services will be delivered from existing clinics and trusted community health facilities. This ensures faster delivery and services that are accessible and familiar to local communities.

Health New Zealand will carry out detailed planning and scoping to identify any additional infrastructure needs, including buildings and equipment. Where new facilities are needed, careful procurement planning will ensure value for money and fit-for-purpose services.

This approach will ensure that urgent care is delivered quickly, efficiently, and close to home for more New Zealanders.