

# Healthcare in Belize and Ambergris Caye

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If you've ever dreamed about packing up and moving to a new country, Belize may very well have topped your list of potential destinations. The island of Ambergris Caye in Belize, for example, boasts some of the world's most beautiful beaches, a warm climate throughout the year, a low cost of living and a thriving expatriate community.

Both the banking and government systems are stable and secure, and infrastructure is impressive, leaving many potential residents with one major concern: healthcare. Read on to get a better idea of healthcare in Belize, particularly on Ambergris Caye.

Visiting or even moving to the beautiful island of Ambergris Caye is becoming more and more popular as travelers from around the world realize how much this incredible destination has to offer. Although the island has stunning beaches, great dining opportunities, a friendly population and affordable accommodations, many potential residents are concerned about the issue of health services and medical care. But there is nothing to be concerned about. Although there is not major hospital on the island, there are many medical professionals, doctors and treatment facilities.

## Major Hospitals in Belize

Some expats believe that if they require major surgery or an emergency procedure, they will need to head to another country. Thankfully, that is rarely the case. Although Belize's proximity to the East Coast of the United States means that traveling for medical attention is certainly easy enough, most expats are quite happy to be treated in one of the modern, established and well-outfitted hospitals in Belize. Some of the largest hospitals are easy accessible and found in the capital of Belize City.

## Local Clinics on Ambergris Caye

For non-emergency treatment, a local doctor or clinic on Ambergris Caye can be the quickest and most effective option for an expat. A trip to the doctor is often as cheap as \$20 per visit, and you won't have to

deal with the headache of being reimbursed by an insurance provider. Ambergris Caye boasts a 24-hour clinic with doctors on call who have international medical experience, which is a huge bonus of living on the island.

## **High-Quality, Affordable Healthcare in Belize**

Ultimately, potential residents should not be concerned about the options for healthcare in Belize and Ambergris Caye. Most doctors speak English, eliminating the concern of a language barrier, and many have even been trained overseas at an English-speaking medical school. In emergencies, treatment at Belize City public or private hospitals is a great choice, but medical evacuation can also be easily arranged.

If healthcare is one of your major concerns when it comes to relocating to Ambergris Caye, Belize, you will be pleased to learn about the impressive system in place. [Click here](#) to learn more about what healthcare options are available to expats and how inexpensive most treatments are in Belize.

The population of Belize is under 320,000. Thus, the availability of specialists and services in Belize does not parallel those that one may have become accustomed to in North America. In the event of an emergency, one must be transported to a facility on the mainland, or most likely to Mexico, the United States, or Guatemala.

Fortunately, the number of high quality hospitals and facilities that provide qualified medical staff and exceptional medical attention are increasing on the mainland. On the bright side, the cost of treatment is considerably lower than in North America. Belize Medical Associates, specifically, is an excellent facility that provides quality treatment, comprehensive medical testing, and state-of-the-art equipment.

## **Medical Professionals Who Care**

In San Pedro, it is not uncommon to happen upon your doctor or dentist on the boulevard, at the store, or at a festival. The doctor-patient relationship is very special and intimate on this small island. It is the common practice here for doctors to share their cell phone numbers with their patients. As well, they expect you to call in case of an emergency.

There are numerous travelers' health insurance policies available. If you become ill and are uninsured,

you will still receive treatment but will be required to pay for services rendered by credit card or cash. Luckily, the medical costs in Belize are reasonable, in contrast to the United States. A routine doctor's visit is typically around \$30.00. Many health insurance policies – aside from certain HMOs, Medicaid and Medicare – cover the travelers' medical expenses. However, be sure to double-check your policy beforehand to ensure coverage.

## **Healthcare In Ambergris Caye**

Currently, Ambergris Caye does not have a hospital, but a Polyclinic is available at which a doctor is on call 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

What Ambergris Caye does offer is a reasonable number of dedicated medical practitioners. These family doctors are reminiscent of the 1950s doctors in North America who made house calls when a family member became ill. As well, a doctor on Ambergris Caye will characteristically spend the necessary amount of time with a patient, so that a proper diagnosis is made. The patient is never made to feel rushed.

Most of the medical professionals on Ambergris Caye have been educated and skilled in a specialty. Nevertheless, the lion's share of their days is consumed by treating common maladies or injuries of local patients. The doctors who practice on Ambergris Caye and Belize have been trained educated the USA, the UK, Cuba, Guatemala or Mexico.

Healthcare in Belize is as diverse as is culture and landscape. From highly skilled medical practitioners to herbalists and holistic healers, the healthcare in Belize and Ambergris Caye is adequate with the facilities to keep you well. And in the event of a critical disease or injury, hospitals in Houston and Miami involve only a short plane trip.

For a serious emergency, one needs to be flown to a hospital on the mainland, or to another country (Mexico, USA or Guatemala, most commonly). There are an increasing number of high quality facilities on the mainland that provide trained medical staff and excellent medical attention. The cost of treatment is significantly lower than in North America. Belize Medical Associates, in particular, is a good hospital that provides quality care, comprehensive medical tests, and new equipment.

## **Hospitals in Belize include:**

- Belize Medical Associates
- Belize Health Care Partners
- Karl Huesner Memorial
- Belize City Hospital
- San Pedro Polyclinic II (clinic)
- Belmopan Hospital
- La Loma Luz Hospital
- Corozal Hospital
- Southern Regional Hospital
- Dangriga Hospital
- Orange Walk Hospital
- Punta Gorda Hospital
- San Ignacio Hospital

The only hyperbaric chamber in the country is located on Ambergris Caye. Divers from around the country are flown to the island when decompression treatment is required.

## Health Insurance in Belize

In Belize, health insurance is not required for either residents or visitors. However, it is a recommended investment that many expats choose to purchase for their own peace of mind. Many local and long-term residents, however, don't feel that they need insurance thanks to the impressive local healthcare system, which is so affordable.

Along with inexpensive health insurance that you can purchase in Belize, it is possible that your United States or Canadian policies will work in Belize as well.

Although the healthcare in Belize is affordable and modern, many residents feel more comfortable having their own health insurance policies. Many North American or European policies are applicable while in a foreign destination like Belize, meaning that all your treatment or medical costs would be covered under your health insurance policy like normal. However, it is important to keep in mind that most residents on the island are more than happy with the very inexpensive and efficient medical system in Belize.

There are a variety of travel health care insurance policies available. If you do not have a travel policy and become ill, you will be treated. But if you don't have acceptable health insurance, you'll be required to pay with cash, or by credit card. The cost of treatment in Belize is very reasonable, in comparison to

the United States. A typical doctor's visit is usually \$20-30, depending on the area of the country you live in or are visiting.

Many health insurance policies – except for Medicaid, Medicare and certain HMOs – cover medical expenses while traveling. But do check your policy before you visit to be sure you are covered.

For expats living in Belize, there are a variety of health insurance policies available. Reputable worldwide health insurance companies include BUPA and IMG.

## **Pharmacies on the Island**

There are two different pharmacies on the island, both of which are stocked with all the typical medicines that a person might need. In fact, many of the generic medications are far more affordable on the island than in North America. However, it is generally advised that those with serious medical conditions bring their prescription medications with them to the island. Of course, pharmacies can always have medications shipped in from the mainland of Belize if necessary as well.

## **Doctors and Clinics**

If you suffer a minor injury or ailment while on the island, it is likely that you will be treated by one of the many doctors in the area who maintain private practices. Since the cost of living is so low, and there is no expensive health care insurance system making a visit to the doctor as little as \$20 at a time. Although many of the doctors are trained specialists, the most common injuries are minor accidents and need basic treatment. There is a large Polyclinic in San Pedro that is always open and has a doctor on call at all times. The size of the island means that you can get treatment within minutes, typically in less time that it would take you to be seen by a nurse in a large North American hospital.

## **Diving Emergencies**

Since the island is a major scuba diving destination, there are occasionally some diving emergencies that come about because divers ascend too quickly from deep depths. Thankfully, there is a hyperbaric chamber right in San Pedro should it be necessary for visitors or residents.

# Emergency Medical Transport

In the event that individuals on the island need medical assistance or treatment that can't be provided in San Pedro, they can easily get to the mainland of Belize. In Belize City there is a large modern hospital, and there is always the option of being transported to an American hospital less than two hours away. A medical transport plane called the Wings of Life is always ready to take patients off the island for further treatment in emergencies.

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