

High Cost Treatment Pool (HCTP) – FAQs

What is the High Cost Treatment Pool?

- The High Cost Treatment Pool (HCTP/the Pool) is funded by Health New Zealand - Te Whatu Ora for one-off treatments that are not funded by the public health system in New Zealand. This includes treatments only available outside New Zealand, or only in private New Zealand hospitals.
- The purpose of the Pool is to provide equitable access to complex treatment for eligible people throughout New Zealand.

Who can make an application to the HCTP?

Applications to the Pool can **only** be made by a public hospital specialist on a patient's behalf **prior** to treatment commencing. Application must include supporting documentation and recommendations for treatment.

Applications are made, for example, after:

- A referral is made to a hospital specialist from a patient's general practitioner (GP) or Private Specialist, and consultation with a hospital specialist has occurred, or
- A specialist decides that a person who has been in hospital needs further complex care that is not available in the public health system in New Zealand.

Only district staff and specialists can email HCTP@tewhatauora.govt.nz for the application form and further information. All other queries will be automatically replied to with a response to contact their primary care provider (General Practitioner) or district specialist in the first instance.

Who evaluates applications and how long does it take for an application to be processed?

The timeline from the initial consultation with a public hospital specialist to submitting an application to the High Cost Treatment Pool (HCTP) can vary.

Once the application and supporting documentation have been received, the HCTP team will evaluate and process the application within 15 working days, excluding public holidays and weekends. The process involves a preliminary review by the HCTP team to ensure completeness, followed by an assessment conducted by the HCTP Clinical Panel. In certain cases, additional information and discussions with the district referrer, potential treatment provider, and/or other subject matter experts may be required, potentially extending the timeframe beyond the stated 15 working days. The application may be accepted, declined, or placed on hold pending further assessment or information. The referring district specialist will be informed of the decision at that time.

Who is eligible for funded treatment through the High Cost Treatment Pool?

The following individuals are eligible for treatment funded through the High Cost Treatment Pool:

- New Zealand citizens (under the Citizenship Act 1977 or the Citizenship (Western Samoa) Act 1982).
- New Zealand residents who hold a resident visa.
- Australian citizens and permanent residents who reside, or intend to reside, in New Zealand for two years or more.
- Refugees and protected persons.
- Additional special eligibility criteria listed on the Health New Zealand - Te Whatu Ora website.

For further details, please refer to the eligibility guidelines provided by Health New Zealand - Te Whatu Ora: [Health New Zealand - Te Whatu Ora](#)

What high cost treatments are eligible for funding?

High Cost Treatment includes medical treatments only available overseas, complex cases, or treatments currently available outside public hospitals. A complex case means a case that may require case management due to its rarity, clinical complexity and high cost.

The general eligibility criteria are:

- the treatment must have proven efficacy through appropriate clinical trials, and preferably also have been established as effective through regular application
- treatment would lead to reasonable prospects of survival and to an improved quality of life after treatment
- the treatment is well established and not an experimental form of treatment
- the treatment is cost-effective.
- Failure to receive the treatment would likely result in serious irreversible deterioration in the patient's condition, or an inability to recover lost function, or significant impairment to normal development of a child.
- Failure to receive the treatment could deny an adult with a lifelong disability access to treatment which would lead to a marked improvement in their quality of life.

Applications to the High Cost Treatment Pool must be made in advance of treatment commencing. Retrospective applications cannot be considered. All contracts and agreements are prepared between Health New Zealand and the treatment provider.

Do I have to pay for Travel?

No, all travel and accommodation are covered by your local district once a contract is signed between Health New Zealand - Te Whatu Ora and the treatment provider. Insurance is also arranged at no cost to the patient.

Am I required to send any information to the High Cost Treatment Pool?

No, patients should not send the HCTP team any medical information such as NHI number, diagnosis, treatment plan or other personal information. The specialist at your district will ensure all relevant information is submitted.

What happens if my condition isn't covered by the High Cost Treatment Pool?

You should discuss the matter with the specialist who made the referral on your behalf. They will be able to explain the reason for the outcome and discuss options.

Can I choose my overseas treatment provider?

No, the referring specialist or the HCTP Clinical Panel will decide who provides the treatment.

I know a new procedure is being tested overseas, can I be referred to that hospital for treatment?

The HCTP will only fund treatments that have proven efficacy through appropriate clinical trials, and preferably also have been established as effective through regular application. Treatments that do not meet this criteria are not funded by the HCTP.

Due to the urgency for treatment, I have already arranged with an overseas hospital to treat me, does this help to shorten the approval process?

All arrangements with hospitals providing HCTP treatment must be organised by Health New Zealand and not by a patient.