

Healthcare for Expats

Again, the realities of life make it necessary to deal with the health care system in any country you live. In the U.S. and the U.K. both, expectations have become very high when it comes to quality of health care. As beneficiaries of such a highly evolved medical community, we have become quite spoiled and the thought of moving to a smaller country way off in Asia can cause some anxiety about how to take care of our health safely.

The truth is that Thailand has one of the best medical systems in Asia with private and government-run hospitals which offer highly trained medical personnel and expert care. Most medications are available without a prescription, even things like antibiotics and popular but controversial drugs like Viagra. The prices are close to half what you would pay back home but there are serious issues to be considered when purchasing drugs that are not regulated as they are in the West. A pharmacist becomes a necessary part of your medical team and you should always consult with one before purchasing medications in Thailand, especially generic drugs. Of course, it goes without saying that, even if a prescription is not necessary, such drugs should not be taken unless approved by a physician as a necessary and beneficial form of medical treatment for you. Dental care is also outstanding in Thailand and highly affordable like medical care. People come from places like Korea and Japan to learn due to the high level of expertise of dentists in Thailand. Medical tours are becoming quite common for groups from other Asian countries like Korea and Japan. Cosmetic surgery has become much more popular in recent years, especially "nose jobs." For some reasons, Thais seem to prefer the larger American nose and it's possible to get one for as little as \$500 while breast enlargements, which are becoming more and more popular, can cost as little as \$1,000. The cost of all health care in Thailand is much lower than in the West and this fact can be a "make-it-or-break-it" factor in deciding where to live out the retirement years when health issues tend to become more serious and urgent. Regardless of how well we take care of ourselves by eating right, exercising and seeing our doctor regularly, we will all need to rely on good health care wherever we are living. The "Baby Boomers" (turning 50 now) are beginning to see what their own future might look like as they begin to care for their own parents and they're learning about how much it will cost. Fortunately, such long-term care is more affordable in Thailand.