



Dr. Jung

## Health insurance valid all over Europe



Many people when they start living in Lanzarote ask the same question "what happens if I get ill, where can I go to get advice and good treatment?" We asked a local family doctor, Doctor Jung, owner of the Deutsche Arztpraxis in Playa Blanca, to explain how the health system works here on the Island and how to make certain that you are completely insured.

### How would you assess the medical system in Playa Blanca?

Basically the health system on the Island is very good, you cannot compare it with big European cities where hospitals are varied and numerous, here it is rather like living in rural areas in any EU country. There are two hospitals on the Island, the General Hospital and a private one, and experienced local doctors compensate for the distance. For example I have 3 sickbeds in my practice, including one for intensive care, and all the medical equipment needed to look after my patients until, if it is necessary, they have to be taken to hospital. The local residents are happy to accept this situation, preferring to live on this quiet island to living in a big city.

### What do I have to do to be well insured?

This is very easy as the Canary Islands are part of the EU and have an interchange scheme with all the other EU countries, so if you were insured in your own EU country, you will be insured here. Retired people and workers with an official working contract are automatically insured within the Spanish

health system. Unfortunately there are still residents who work without a proper licence and who do not have private insurance, this can result in big bills should they be ill. If you are not insured within the official health system there is a wide choice of relatively cheap private insurances, offering a lot of different services.

### Are there sufficient specialists on the Island?

More and more specialists from many different European countries are settling here, giving you a choice of a doctor who can speak your own language. Within the official health system everything is easy, the doctor in your local health centre will refer you directly to the relevant specialist. If you have good private insurance you can choose which specialist you want to go to, including ones on neighbouring islands.

### What would you say are typical illnesses, and how can one deal with them?

Basically in my practice I treat all kinds of illnesses and emergencies. It is very important to adapt to the special climatic conditions of the Island. The body needs more fluid here and I recommend that healthy people drink at least three litres of water a day, when you supply the body with sufficient fluids you can avoid some of the typical ailments, such as bronchitis or problems in the gastro-intestinal tract. You can stop de-hydration of which headaches and fatigue are symptomatic.

It is a really interesting fact that residents seem to get stress or age related illnesses like strokes or heart attacks less frequently. These serious, and in Europe frequent, ailments seem to happen to tourists. Here you live a better and more relaxed life on this peaceful Island, with its good climate, clean air, sunshine and sea, together with the Canarian calm that is so nicely expressed in the Spanish word 'tranquilo'. The constant good temperatures and dry air help considerably to improve chronic illnesses such as arthritis, rheumatism, skin problems and asthma. A lot of residents in my practice say that they have never felt in better health than here in Lanzarote.

### How do medics charge for their services?

As mentioned before, the health insurance takes care of that, but you have to remember that all the private doctors work on a free economical basis. With good private insurance you are free to choose your doctor, and it is advisable to compare prices and enquire about qualifications to prepare yourself for any emergency, so that you know which doctor you prefer to go to, and what is included in your insurance, this avoids any confusion and makes sure that if there is an emergency you don't have any hidden costs.

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