

## **Right to health and access to healthcare services**

### *Belarus*

In accordance with Article 45 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, citizens of the Republic of Belarus are guaranteed the right to health care, including free treatment at public expense.

The right of citizens of the Republic of Belarus to affordable medical care is regulated by the Law of the Republic of Belarus “On Health Care”.

The state program “People’s Health and Demographic Security of the Republic of Belarus” for 2021–2025 is aimed at creating conditions for improving the health of the population, covering all stages of life, improving the quality and affordability of healthcare services.

Healthcare of the Republic of Belarus is a multi-level system of healthcare organizations, thanks to which medical care is available in rural areas and is adapted to the functional capabilities of an elderly person. A patient-centered approach is being implemented in the provision of primary health care to the elderly population.

In order to increase the accessibility of medical services, as part of the policy of ensuring an environment for healthy and active aging, hospital-replacing technologies are used, providing older people with a wide range of medical services, regardless of their place of residence. Mobile medical systems are being successfully used, and emergency medical care has been modernized.

Modern medical centers have introduced new technologies and types of treatment for specialized types of diseases. Republican clinics successfully disseminate best practices in providing high-tech medical services to the regional level and are available to patients regardless of age.

The network of interdistrict and interregional centers is expanding, designed to bring high-tech medical care closer to the population living in rural areas, which include a large proportion of elderly patients with limited mobility.

Telemedicine consulting technologies are actively used in Belarus to improve the accessibility and quality of medical care.

Priority is given to ensuring universal access to health care, as well as to safe, effective and high-quality medicines and vaccines.

To ensure the availability of medicines, the domestic pharmaceutical industry is actively developing. Certain categories of citizens, depending on the disease or disability group, are provided with medicines and technical means of social rehabilitation free of charge or on preferential terms.

Taking into account the needs of older citizens when providing them with medical care, Belarus has taken a course towards creating a geriatric service. In 2016, the Republican Gerontological Center (active ageing) and 7 regional geriatric centers were created.

Direct work at the local level with citizens over 60 years of age is carried out by geriatricians and general practitioners. The outpatient health care organizations have geriatric rooms (94) and “third age schools” (416).

In 2023, the Ministry of Health approved recommendations for the early detection of cognitive impairment and senile asthenia syndrome in citizens over 75 years of age, and also developed an algorithm for the actions of medical specialist when working with patients with geriatric syndromes.

The healthcare system of Belarus is focused on providing comprehensive medical and social care aimed at ensuring active longevity of older people.

Elderly patients in need of care are provided with palliative and medical and social care in hospices, palliative care units, mobile palliative care teams, as well as in nursing hospitals.

Measures to promote a healthy lifestyle are aimed at increasing healthy life expectancy and eliminating gender differences in life expectancy.

Thus, to identify risk factors, a study was conducted on the prevalence of behavioral and biological risk factors using the international STEPS methodology “Prevalence of risk factors for non-communicable diseases in the Republic of Belarus”.

According to the results of the study, the main efforts are aimed at preventing risk factors for diseases of the circulatory system, oncological, neurological and endocrine diseases, which make the main contribution to the morbidity structure of elderly patients.

**The priority areas of action are the following:**

- improving the quality and accessibility of healthcare services aimed at the needs of older citizens;
- encouraging health-saving behaviors at all stages of life, in order to reduce the epidemiological burden of non-communicable diseases and reduce gender differences in health indicators and life expectancy of the population;
- expanding the practice of organizing “long-term care” and “active ageing” schools, as well as creating other models of motivating active ageing for older citizens;
- development of an integrated approach to the provision of medical care and services based on identifying the needs of older citizens;
- development of geriatric service as a unified system of long-term medical care;
- developing a strategic approach to mental health that focuses on the needs of older citizens;
- development of new forms and methods of rehabilitation of older citizens to maintain their level of physical activity.