

Understanding Spanish Medical Specialties

A Practical Guide for English Speakers Using Private Health Insurance in Spain

*Good insurance isn't just about having a
policy. It's about understanding how to use it
when you need it most.*

Prepared by Jeremy Ryan
MyInsuranceSpain.com

Foreword

Navigating a healthcare system in another language can be challenging, even when your health insurance provides excellent cover.

Many English-speaking residents in Spain find that while appointments are easy to arrange and healthcare professionals are highly qualified, provider directories often continue to list medical specialties using their Spanish names.

Recognising whether you need Traumatología, Aparato Digestivo or Otorrinolaringología is not always straightforward if English is your first language.

This guide has been created to bridge that gap by providing clear English translations together with simple explanations of what each specialist treats and when you might need to see them.

Whether you're arranging a routine consultation or looking for the right specialist for a particular health concern, we hope this guide helps you make the most of your private health insurance in Spain.

Jeremy Ryan
MyInsuranceSpain.com

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Welcome to the Guide

Welcome

Whether you're living in Spain permanently or applying for a visa, understanding the healthcare system is an important part of settling into your new life.

Many private health insurance providers now offer English-language websites and mobile apps, making it much easier to manage your policy. However, one area that can still cause confusion is the list of medical specialties, which often remains in Spanish.

Although many of these terms resemble their English equivalents, others are far less obvious. This guide has been designed to help you recognise the specialist you need, understand what they treat, and make better use of your private health insurance.

As a companion to this guide, we've also created a downloadable English translation of the specialist directory to complement insurers' provider search tools.

We hope this guide helps you feel more confident when arranging medical appointments in Spain.

How to Use This Guide

Each medical specialty includes four pieces of information:

Spanish Name

The name you'll usually see in your insurer's directory or hospital website.

English Name

The medical specialty most commonly used in English-speaking countries.

What They Treat

A brief explanation of when you would normally choose that specialist.

Common Reasons to Visit

A brief explanation of when you would normally choose that specialist.

Spanish	English	Treats	Common reasons to visit
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Cardiología	Cardiology	Diseases of the heart and circulatory system	Chest pain, High blood pressure, Heart rhythm problems, heart murmurs
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Finding the Right Specialist

If you're unsure which specialist you need, don't worry.

Many people search by their symptoms rather than by the name of a medical specialty.

Which Specialist Do I Need?

If you have...	You will probably need...
Chest pain	Cardiology
Skin rash	Dermatology
Back pain	Orthopaedics & Trauma Surgery
Ear pain	Ears, Nose & Throat (ENT)
Frequent headaches	Neurology
Stomach pain	Gastroenterology
Pregnancy	Obstetrics & Gynaecology
Child with a fever	Paediatrics
Vision problems	Ophthalmology

This guide is intended to help you understand the names of medical specialties commonly used in Spain. It is not intended to provide medical advice or help you diagnose a medical condition. If you require urgent medical attention, please contact your insurer's emergency assistance service or attend one of the emergency departments included in your health insurance policy.

Heart And Circulation

	Spanish	English	Treats	Common Reasons
	Cardiología	Cardiology	Heart	Chest Pain
	Angiología	Vascular Surgery	Blood Vessels	Varicose Veins
	Cirugía Cardiovascular	Cardiac Surgery	Heart Surgery	Bypass

Respiratory System

	Spanish	English	Treats	Common Reasons
	Neumología	Respiratory Medicine (Pulmonology)	Lungs & breathing	Asthma, COPD
	Cirugía Torácica	Thoracic Surgery	Chest & Lungs	Lung Surgery, Chest Conditions

Brain & Nervous System

	Spanish	English	Treats	Common Reasons
	Neurología	Neurology	Brain & Nerves	Headaches, Migraines
	Neurocirugía	Neurosurgery	Brain & Spine	Brain Tumours, Spinal disorders
	Neurofisiología Clínica	Clinical Neurophysiology	Nerve Testing	Seizures

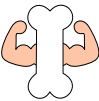
Eyes, Ears, Nose and Throat

	Spanish	English	Treats	Common Reasons
	Oftalmología	Ophthalmology	Eye conditions	Cataracts, glaucoma
	Otorrinolaringología	ENT	ENT conditions	Hearing Loss, Sinus Problems
	Urgencias Oftalmológicas	Eye Emergency	Eye Emergencies	Eye injuries

Women & Children's Health

	Spanish	English	Treats	Common Reasons
	Obstetricia & Ginecología	Obstetrics & Gynaecology	Pregnancy & Women's Health	Pregnancy, Cervical Screening
	Pediatría	Paediatrics	Children's Health	Childhood Illnesses
	Urgencias Ginecológicas	Gynaecological Emergency	Women's Emergencies	Pregnancy Complications

Bones, Joints & Muscles

	Spanish	English	Treats	Common Reasons
	Reumatología	Rheumatology	Autoimmune joint disease	Rheumatoid arthritis
	Fisioterapia	Physiotherapy	Physical rehabilitation	Muscle injuries
	Traumatología y Cirugía Ortopédica	Orthopaedics & Trauma	Bones & Joints	Fractures, Arthritis

General Medicine



Spanish	English	Treats	Common Reasons
Medicina General	General Practice (GP)	General health	First Point of Contact
Medicina Interna	Internal Medicine	Complex Adult Illness	Multiple Conditions
Enfermería	Nursing	Clinical Care	Dressings, Injections

Blood, Hormones & Immunity



Spanish	English	Treats	Common Reasons
Alergología	Allergy Medicine	Allergies	Hay Fever, Allergies
Endocrinología & Nutrición	Endocrinology & Nutrition	Hormones & Diabetes	Thyroid, Diabetes
Nefrología	Nephrology	Kidney Disease	Hypertension

Cancer Care



Spanish	English	Treats	Common Reasons
Oncología Médica	Medical Oncology	Cancer Treatment	Chemotherapy
Oncología Radioterápica	Radiation Oncology	Radiotherapy	Cancer Treatment

Tests, Imaging & Diagnosis

	Spanish	English	Treats	Common Reasons
	Análisis Clínicos	Laboratory Medicine	Blood & Lab Tests	Blood Tests
	Anatomía Patológica	Pathology	Tissue Diagnosis	Biopsies
	Radiodiagnóstico	Diagnostic Radiology	Medical Imaging	Medical Imaging

Surgery

	Spanish	English	Treats	Common Reasons
	Cirugía General y del Aparato Digestivo	General & Digestive Surgery	Abdominal Surgery	Hernias, Gallbladder

Digestive System

	Spanish	English	Treats	Common Reasons
	Aparato Digestivo	Gastroenterology	Digestive System	IBS, Reflux, Ulcers

Hospitals & Emergency care

	Spanish	English	Treats	Common Reasons
	Hospital	Hospital	Inpatient & Outpatient Care	Specialist Treatment
	Urgencias Generales	Emergency Department	Medical Emergencies	Serious Illness or Injury

Common Medical Terms

Cita	Appointment
Especialidad	Speciality
Médico	Doctor
Hospital	Hospital
Urgencias	Emergency Department
Pruebas	Tests
Análisis	Blood test
Receta	Prescription
Autorización	Authorisation
Informe Médico	Medical Report
Volante	Request slip

Frequently Asked Questions

Do doctors and nurses speak English?

Some do, but it cannot be guaranteed. Many doctors, particularly in popular expatriate areas and larger cities such as Madrid, Barcelona, Málaga and Valencia, have a reasonable level of English. However, Spain is a Spanish-speaking country, and medical consultations are generally conducted in Spanish.

The Union Madrileña mobile app is available in English, making it easier to find healthcare providers and manage your policy. This guide also translates the Spanish names of medical specialties to help you choose the right doctor.

If speaking English is important to you, we recommend checking the doctor's language skills when booking your appointment. Some clinics indicate the languages spoken, but this information may not always be available.

Remember: Just as you would not expect every doctor in the UK to speak Spanish, it is not realistic to expect every healthcare professional in Spain to speak English. Preparing a few key medical phrases or taking a trusted friend or interpreter to important appointments can often be helpful.

Do I need to register with one particular doctor?

No.

Unlike some healthcare systems, most private health insurance policies in Spain do not require you to register with a single family doctor or GP.

You are generally free to choose any doctor or specialist within your insurer's approved medical network.

Do I need a referral to see a specialist?

In many cases, no.

One of the advantages of private healthcare in Spain is that you can often book an appointment directly with a specialist without first visiting a GP.

However, some treatments, diagnostic tests or procedures may require prior authorisation or a referral, depending on your policy. Always check your policy conditions if you are unsure.

Is the Union Madrileña mobile app available in English?

Yes.

The app interface is available in English, making it easier to:

- Find doctors and hospitals.
- Manage your policy.
- View your digital health card.
- Easily update your personal contact and payment details.

Please note that many medical specialties are still listed in Spanish, which is why we created this guide to help you understand them.

Can I choose my own doctor?

Yes.

You are generally free to choose from the doctors and specialists included in your insurer's approved medical network.

What should I do if I need emergency treatment?

If you believe you have a medical emergency, attend the nearest emergency hospital or emergency department covered by your health insurance policy as soon as possible.

Keep your digital health card available and follow the emergency procedures outlined by your insurer.

What if I don't understand something in the app?

The Union Madrileña app is available in English, but some medical terminology and specialist names remain in Spanish.

This guide has been created to help you understand those terms more easily. If you are a client of My Insurance Spain and need further assistance understanding your cover or using the app, we are always happy to help.

Can I use any private hospital in Spain?

No.

Your health insurance gives you access to a network of approved hospitals, clinics and specialists. Before arranging treatment, you should always check that the hospital or clinic is included in your insurer's current medical network.

The Union Madrileña mobile app makes this easy by allowing you to search for participating hospitals and healthcare providers directly from your phone.

If you attend a private hospital or clinic that is not included in your policy's medical network, your insurer will not cover the cost of your treatment.

Still need help?

If you are a client and need help understanding your health insurance, using the Union Madrileña app, or finding the appropriate medical specialty, we're always happy to help.

Email: contact@myinsurancespain.com

Website: www.myinsurancespain.com





This guide has been prepared by MyInsuranceSpain.com for general informational purposes only.

Although every effort has been made to ensure the information is accurate at the time of publication, medical services, provider networks, insurer procedures and healthcare terminology may change without notice.

This guide should not be relied upon as medical advice, legal advice or insurance advice.

Always consult a qualified healthcare professional regarding medical concerns and refer to your insurance policy documentation or contact your insurer for confirmation of cover, authorisations and participating healthcare providers.

To the fullest extent permitted by applicable law, My Insurance Spain accepts no liability for any loss, damage or inconvenience arising from the use of this guide or from reliance on the information contained within it.

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