

Practical guide to the Hungarian hospital system - how to get prepared to a hospital stay and/or COVID-19 hospital quarantine

informal hints to foreign students in Hungary

First of all: DO NOT PANIC!

COVID-19 infection affects severely mainly the older population (above 60 years of age), so infected university students likely will have only mild (if any) symptoms, resembling a cold or a mild flu. Nevertheless, all necessary precautions are to be kept in order to slow down the community spread of the virus.

1. **Obey all instructions given by the authorities.** Remember that anyone who does not comply with the epidemiological measures commits crime with legal consequences and can be expelled from Hungary.
2. Prepare and pack the following items (do not exceed the size of a sports bag or a handbag suitcase as storage place within the wards is normally limited):

for the bathroom:

- toilet paper (2-3 rolls, needed for ~2 weeks)
- necessary sanitary tools for women (tampons, sanitary pads, etc)
- soap, shampoo and shower / shaving gel, anti-perspirant
- toothbrush and toothpaste
- some washing liquid (1-2 dl OR or use the soap)
- 2 towels (1 large, 1 medium size), 1 medium size bathing sponge
- general small hygienic tools (hairbrush/comb, small scissors, razor, hairpins, tweezers – hairdryer only in case it is indeed needed)
- paper handkerchief
- pair of slippers (water resistant)

for eating and drinking:

- a personal set of cutlery: a large and a small spoon, a fork and a sharp knife
- a personal mug (2-3 dl)
- a small (15-20 cm diameter) plate, preferably from plastic or metal
- 2 dishtowels
- some paper napkins
- small bottle of dishwasher liquid + a small sponge

for clothing (it is usually very warm inside the ward, so thick clothing is normally unnecessary):

- underwear (at least for 4 days; be prepared to wash them by hand)
- T-shirts (4-5, can be used during the day or for sleeping, as well)
- leggings, thin joggers (2-3)
- thin pair of socks (3-4 pairs)

- a thin pullover / sweater
- 2 cotton pyjamas / nightgowns if needed

other personal items:

- residence permit, TAJ card (passport or student card is not necessary)
- any regular medicaments enough for 2-3 weeks (antipyretic pills or any other drugs needed for the potential therapy will be provided by the hospital)
- limited amount of cash (max 5000 HUF), bankcard (needed only after leaving the hospital)
- electrical devices: phone, laptop/tablet + earphones, external drive if needed
- necessary chargers
- a small headlamp (if available; to read without disturbing your roommates)
- in case of more electrical devices, a power distributor (with 2m cable)
- books, magazines, cards...
- pen and pencil, an A5 exercise book (for communicating)
- some sweets/chocolate or anything which can legally bright up your day and can be stored at room temperature ☺

3. Be prepared for the following restrictions:

- in case of a quarantine, you will not be allowed to leave the room and to get visitors or to buy anything from the hospital canteen
- free WiFi will not be (very likely) provided
- smoking is generally prohibited in hospitals
- hospital or official personnel can enter the ward at any time, often already before 6 am
- fridge might not be within the room, so storing food for longer time will not be possible
- specific diet will be provided only for medical reasons (eg., for diabetes or gluten-free needs, food allergy, etc) – religious restrictions or vegan/vegetarian needs are normally not fulfilled; **in case you need specific diet due to medical reasons, mention and check it every time when food is served to you**
- food is served 3 times daily (enough to survive but definitely not high cuisine, with limited amount of fresh fruit or vegetables)
 - i. for breakfast: plenty of bread or rolls, a small pot of margarine plus a small soft cheese OR some salami OR jam; normally tea or milk
 - ii. for lunch: a soup and a main dish (a piece of meat with garnish OR pastry)
 - iii. for the evening meal: some bread or rolls, a small soft cheese OR some salami OR canned tuna, etc
- English knowledge of the personnel might be limited, so try to communicate with a big smile and the help of Google translator ☺

4. Be ready and willing to:

- give all the required info about your previous social contacts (in case you are tested COVID-19 positive)
- be patient and kind with the nurses and doctors as they are likely doing their best under high pressure
- accept that until you develop symptoms, you will be in the same ward with other potentially infected people and might not be tested regularly for COVID-19

5. Know that you have the right:

- to communicate freely and use your phone, unless there is ongoing medical examinations
- to get in contact and inform the embassy of your home country about your hospitalisation
- to get all information about your medical status and the necessary treatments – but always ask clearly otherwise medical personnel might think that you are not interested...

Keep healthy and take care of you and others around you! 😊