



The Guide to Getting Surgery in Thailand

Choosing a hospital, real prices, deposits, visa, recovery alone and flying home.

Bangkok, Pattaya, Phuket, Chiang Mai

Researched by Elder Thai Staff · October 2026

Emergency in Thailand: call **1669**



The Guide to Getting Surgery in Thailand

Emergency in Thailand: call 1669 (free national [medical emergency line](#)). Your hospital's own line may be faster: [Bumrungrad 1378](#) from a Thai SIM or **+66 2066 8888** from a foreign phone; [Bangkok Hospital 1719](#) from a Thai mobile or **+66 2310 3000** from a foreign phone.

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Recovering on your own? [Get a caregiver for the days after surgery →](#)

This guide is for you if you are planning an operation in Thailand, usually after flying in, and you may be doing it on your own. It covers every kind of planned surgery: keyhole and general surgery (gallbladder, hernia), joint and spine surgery, cosmetic surgery and more. It takes you from choosing a hospital to the day you fly home, with real Thai prices and the questions to ask at each step.

Having bone or joint surgery? Read this guide for the planning, then our deeper [orthopedic surgery guide](#) for knee, hip, shoulder and spine recovery. Having a knee replaced? See [The Thailand Knee Replacement Guide](#).

Your surgeon in Thailand always has the final say. Where this guide and your surgeon differ, follow your surgeon.

1. The short answer

1. **Choose the hospital first, then the surgeon.** Look for JCI or Thai HA accreditation, an international patient department, and a surgeon whose licence you can check on the [Medical Council of Thailand's register](#).
2. **Get a written, itemised quote.** Thai hospitals publish package prices, but many packages are only for Thai citizens and foreigners living in Thailand. Ask which price applies to you.
3. **Assume you are self-pay until your insurer confirms cover in writing, and expect to pay a deposit before surgery.** Without a guarantee letter from your insurer, large private hospitals ask for the [full estimated cost up front](#).
4. **Plan your stay around the day you are cleared to fly, not the day you leave hospital.** Book a flexible ticket.
5. **Pick a visa that covers your whole recovery.** Ask [Thai Kru](#) if you are unsure.
6. **Book a recovery base near the hospital** with a lift and a walk-in shower.
7. **Decide before you fly who will be with you for the first nights.** If nobody is coming with you, arrange help now, not on discharge day.

[Going alone? See how a caregiver fits into your plan →](#)

2. Choose your hospital and surgeon

Look for accreditation

Two seals matter in Thailand:

- **JCI (Joint Commission International).** An international standard. Check any hospital on [JCI's own search page](#), not just the logo on the hospital website. Accreditation can lapse.

- **HA (Hospital Accreditation)** from Thailand's [Healthcare Accreditation Institute](#) (สว.), the national standard. Its register shows each hospital's level and expiry date. The institute's database covers [1,474 public and private hospitals](#).

Many Thai private hospitals hold both. A provincial hospital with HA only can still be a good choice for a Thai resident, but if you are flying in alone, an internationally accredited hospital with an international department makes everything easier: English-speaking coordinators, interpreters, and staff used to visas and insurers.

Check the surgeon

- **Licence.** Search the surgeon's name or licence number on the [Medical Council of Thailand register](#). If the name doesn't appear, ask the hospital why before you pay anything.
- **Specialty.** Ask how many of your exact operation the surgeon does each year, and whether they will see you at every follow-up visit.
- **Meet before you commit.** Most Thai private hospitals let you book a consultation online. If you can, arrive a few days early so the consultation, tests and surgery are not squeezed into one day.

Questions to email the international department

Ask	Why it matters
Which surgeon, and can I see their profile?	You can check their licence and specialty.
Is this package price open to foreign visitors?	Many packages say "Thai and expats only".
What does the price include: implant, tests, nights, take-home medicines, physio, follow-ups?	Exclusions are where bills grow.
What happens to the price if there are complications?	Most packages charge complications at actual cost .
How much is the deposit, and when is it due?	Some want it before admission.
Do you direct-bill my insurer?	Otherwise you pay and claim yourself.
Can you arrange airport pickup, an interpreter or a hotel near the hospital?	Most international departments can.
When will I be fit to fly home?	This sets how long you stay.

Our comparison of [Bangkok hospitals by cost and quality](#) can help you shortlist.

3. What surgery costs in Thailand

These are real package prices published by Thai hospitals in 2026. They are examples, not quotes, and most expire on 31 December 2026.

Operation	Hospital and published price	What's notable
Keyhole gallbladder removal	Phyathai Phaholyothin : 119,000 THB. Vichaiyut : 159,000 THB. Bangkok Hospital : 238,000 THB with 1 night.	Navavej's similar package is for Thai and resident foreigners only .

Operation	Hospital and published price	What's notable
Keyhole hernia repair	MedPark : 230,000 THB one side, 335,000 THB both. Phyathai 1 : 229,000 THB both sides, 1 night.	MedPark excludes take-home medicines and pre-op checks. Phyathai's price is for Thai patients.
Total knee replacement, one knee	Phyathai Nawamin : 210,000 THB, 3 nights. Bangkok Hospital : 270,000 THB without implant, 399,000 THB robotic with implant. Samitivej : 529,000 THB robotic, 4 days, implant included.	See The Thailand Knee Replacement Guide for more.
Both knees, robotic, fly-in patients	Bangkok International Hospital : 745,000 THB, implant included, 5 nights.	One of the few packages that says "Available for Fly in".
Hip replacement, one side	Bangkok Hospital : 365,000 THB without implant. Samitivej : 629,000 THB robotic, implant included.	

Three things to notice:

- **Who the price is for.** Bangkok Hospital's joint packages say the price is "[for Thai people and expats](#)", Piyavate's say [Thai nationals and foreigners living in Thailand only](#), and Phyathai 1's hernia package says Thai patients. If you are flying in, ask for the international price in writing. It may be higher.
- **What is left out.** Pre-op tests, extra nights, ICU, complications, your regular medicines and sometimes the implant are commonly excluded. Bangkok Hospital's joint package includes take-home medicines [for the operation only](#); MedPark's hernia package [excludes them](#).
- **Insurance.** Some packages are self-pay only. Ratchaphruek's knee package [cannot be used with insurance](#).

Add your Thailand costs on top: flights, a recovery base (from about [1,705 THB a night near Bumrungrad](#)), visa fees, equipment rental, home physio (about [1,500-1,800 THB a session](#) in Bangkok) and help at home if you need it (Elder Thai from 1,200 THB for 4 hours, [see below](#)). For a wider price list, see our [Thailand medical procedures cost guide](#).

4. Quotes, deposits and insurance

Getting a real quote

- Email the international department your medical reports, scans and a list of your medicines. Ask for a **written estimate in Thai baht**.
- Read it as a range. Bumrungrad says its estimate "[represents a possible range of costs only](#)" and care is customised.
- Ask for an itemised bill at the end. Bumrungrad provides [itemised details on request](#).

Deposits

- **Self-pay:** Bumrungrad requires a [full deposit for all procedures](#). Bangkok Hospital asks for a deposit at admission and the [full estimated cost before surgery](#).
- **While you are in:** at Bumrungrad, the bill is updated [every 3 days and more deposit may be asked for](#).
- **Refunds:** unused deposit is refunded after treatment. If you paid by card, a refund can take [3-4 weeks](#) and is converted at the exchange rate of that day.

- **Before you fly:** tell your bank you will make a large payment in Thailand and check your card limit. Bumrungrad [advises exactly this](#).
- **Pay only at the cashier** or by the hospital's official e-payment link, never to a staff member personally ([Bumrungrad](#)).

Insurance

- **Ask your insurer before you book:** is planned surgery abroad covered at all? Is your condition "pre-existing"? What are the deductible and limit?
- **Direct billing** works only with insurers the hospital has a contract with. At Bumrungrad, if the guarantee letter doesn't arrive within 48 hours of admission, you pay a [full deposit](#), refunded once the guarantee arrives. Ask your own hospital for its rule.
- **Travel insurance usually won't cover planned surgery or its complications.** Bumrungrad suggests looking at [medical-tourism complications insurance](#).
- Living in Thailand already? See our guide to [health insurance in Thailand over 60](#).

5. Going alone: what is different

"Did you go alone?" is one of the most common questions under surgery-in-Thailand videos. You can do it. Here is what changes when nobody is with you:

- **Nobody holds the paperwork.** Keep one folder (paper and phone) with your passport copy, quote, insurance letter, medicine list and hospital number (HN).
- **Nobody hears the discharge instructions twice.** Ask to film the nurse or physio, and ask for the medicine list in English ([section 10](#)).
- **Nobody notices you getting worse.** Fever, a hot wound or new breathlessness are easy to miss when you are tired and on painkillers. Check yourself morning and evening ([section 12](#)).
- **The first night is the hardest.** If you could not get to the toilet alone in hospital, don't spend that night alone.
- **In hospital:** you can ask the ward for a patient attendant. Bumrungrad lets inpatients request a [patient attendant](#) through the ward nurses. Elder Thai also sits with patients as an [inpatient companion](#).

Tell the hospital clearly, in writing, before admission: "I am travelling alone. I will recover in a hotel." It changes how they plan your discharge.

[Not sure you can manage alone? See what a caregiver does →](#)

6. How long to stay in Thailand

Leaving hospital is not the finish line. The real date is the day your surgeon **clears you to fly home**.

Type of surgery	Typical hospital stay in Thailand	Before a long flight home
Keyhole (laparoscopic) surgery, e.g. gallbladder, hernia	1-2 nights in most packages (Bangkok Hospital , Phyathai)	The UK CAA advises avoiding flights for about 24 hours after laparoscopic (keyhole) surgery, because of leftover gas, and for 10 days after abdominal surgery, because gut gas expands at altitude. Keyhole operations are also abdominal surgery, so ask your surgeon which figure applies to you. Plan for your first follow-up visit too, usually about a week later.
Knee replacement	3-5 days (Bumrungrad)	Ratchaphruek Hospital advises at least 7 days before flying; many orthopedic units abroad suggest about 3 months before long-haul. See the knee guide .
Hip replacement	About 1-3 days (Phyathai)	See the orthopedic guide .
Shoulder, ACL, spine	1-2 nights for most keyhole joint and small spine operations	See the orthopedic guide .

We found no Thai hospital that publishes a fixed waiting time before long-haul flights after general surgery. The CAA figures above are common international practice; confirm with your hospital in Thailand, which knows your operation and your clot risk.

A simple rule: stay at least until your first follow-up visit, and until you can walk, wash and manage your medicines on your own. Book a flexible ticket. Before you fly, get a **Fit for Travel certificate**; at Bumrungrad it is [valid for 7 days](#).

7. Your visa for that stay

Your options depend on your **nationality**. Choose a visa that covers your **whole recovery**, not just surgery day.

- **Visa exemption (visa-free entry).** Since 15 September 2026, eligible nationalities get up to **30 days**, and it is [meant for tourism](#). Fine for short keyhole surgery. Risky for a joint replacement. An extension costs [1,900 THB](#) and is at the officer's discretion.
- **Tourist visa for medical treatment.** You apply before travelling, for treatment shorter than [about 60 days](#).
- **Non-Immigrant O for medical treatment.** For treatment longer than 60 days. You need a hospital appointment letter and [proof of funds](#). A companion can apply too.
- **Extension for medical treatment inside Thailand.** Your fallback if your doctor says you can't travel yet. You need a doctor's certificate; only [one non-family caregiver](#) can be listed. Large hospitals' international departments help with this.
- **DTV (Destination Thailand Visa).** Medical treatment is one of the [qualifying purposes](#). Needs significant proof of funds; suits a longer, flexible stay.
- **Retirement visa (Non-Immigrant O-A).** For people 50+ who plan to live here; not a visa for one operation ([Thai MFA](#)).

Ask before you book. Rules change and depend on your passport. [Thai Kru](#) can tell you which visa fits your nationality and recovery, and prepare it for you. (Thai Kru is our sister visa service.)

8. Where to stay

Type of place. A serviced apartment or hotel near the hospital, not a beach resort. A serviced apartment gives you a kitchenette and a washing machine, which helps on a longer stay.

Look for:

- a lift and no steps at the entrance
- a walk-in shower, not a bathtub, and no step up into the bathroom (common in Thai condos; ask for photos)
- a chair with arms, and a bed you can sit on with your feet flat on the floor
- a fridge, a microwave and a 24-hour front desk
- under 15 minutes by car to your hospital

Area and cost:

City	Where to look	Cost guide
Bangkok	Around your hospital: Sukhumvit Soi 3-11 for Bumrungrad; Sukhumvit 49 for Samitivej; Phetchaburi Road for Bangkok Hospital	Bumrungrad lists hotels 130-300 m away from about 1,705-3,000 THB a night , up to 6,500 THB
Pattaya	Near Bangkok Hospital Pattaya on Sukhumvit Road, not Walking Street	Ask the hospital's international desk for partner hotels
Phuket	Near Bangkok Hospital Phuket in Phuket Town, not a hilly beach villa	Ask for partner rates
Chiang Mai	Near Bangkok Hospital Chiang Mai or the old-city hospitals	Ask for partner rates

Elder Thai caregivers work in hotels, condos and serviced apartments in all four cities ([hotel recovery care](#)).

9. Getting ready

The week before you fly

- ☐ Written quote, deposit amount and insurance answer in your folder
- ☐ Visa covers your whole recovery
- ☐ Recovery base booked; bathroom photos checked
- ☐ Flexible return flight
- ☐ Bank told about the payment; card limit checked
- ☐ Full list of your current medicines, with doses, in English

Your room

- Clear a straight path from bed to toilet; remove loose mats.
- A night light by the bed and in the bathroom.
- Put everything you use daily between waist and shoulder height.
- Phone charger that reaches the bed.

Supplies (in Thailand)

Item	Where
Walker or crutches (leg surgery)	Usually from the hospital; also Lazada and Shopee
Shower chair (search เก้าอี้อาบน้ำ)	Lazada, Shopee, or rent from KIN in Bangkok
Wheelchair	Rent from KIN , from 2,600 THB a month
Thermometer, dressings, pill box	Boots, Watsons or any pharmacy
Loose clothes, front-opening tops, slip-on shoes with grip	Bring from home

Food

Stock water, fruit and easy breakfasts before surgery. Order meals through **Grab** or **LINE MAN**; the front desk can bring them up. Thai hospitals advise protein (fish, eggs, beans) and plenty of water while you heal ([Phyathai](#)), and no alcohol for at least [24-48 hours](#) after keyhole surgery, longer on painkillers.

Your caregiver

Decide **before** surgery who will be with you on discharge day and the first nights: a friend, a hospital attendant while you are in, or a home caregiver afterwards. Many people book a few hours a day rather than round the clock. [See how Elder Thai can cover your first week →](#)

10. Hospital days and discharge

- **Admission:** bring your passport, insurance card, quote and medicine list. Expect to pay the deposit at admission.
- **Moving early:** Thai hospitals get you up early. After keyhole surgery, Phyathai says getting out of bed and moving [from the first day](#) speeds recovery and lowers complications.
- **Discharge takes hours:** doctor's summary, pharmacy, bill, insurer review, cashier, then your medicines ([Bumrungrad's steps](#)). At Bumrungrad standard discharge time is 12:00, and staying later [costs extra](#).

Ask these, and get the answers written down:

Ask (English)	Thai (polite)
Can you write my medicines and times in English?	ช่วยเขียนชื่อยาและเวลากินเป็นภาษาอังกฤษให้หน่อยได้ไหมครับ/คะ
How many days do these medicines last?	ยานี้ทานได้ที่วันครับ/คะ
When is my next appointment? Which clinic?	นัดครั้งต่อไปวันไหน ที่คลินิกไหนครับ/คะ
When can I shower?	อาบน้ำได้เมื่อไหร่ครับ/คะ
When can I fly home?	ขึ้นเครื่องบินกลับบ้านได้เมื่อไหร่ครับ/คะ
Who do I call at night if there is a problem?	ถ้ามีปัญหาตอนกลางคืน ควรโทรหาใครครับ/คะ

(End with ครับ *khrap* if you are a man, ค่ะ *kha* if you are a woman.)

If you are alone, say so:

"I am staying alone in a hotel. Nobody is with me tonight." ผม/ฉันพักอยู่โรงแรมคนเดียว คืนนี้ไม่มีใครดูแล
ครับ/ค่ะ

Take with you: your medical summary, receipts and insurance claim forms, and the hospital's 24-hour number.

Need someone to collect you and get you settled? An Elder Thai [hospital companion](#) can be there for discharge and the ride back. [Arrange discharge-day help →](#)

11. Recovery and movement rules

Your surgeon's instructions come first. These are the common Thai hospital rules.

Rest

- Feeling tired and weak for **2-3 days** is normal after keyhole surgery ([Phyathai](#)). Sleep 8-10 hours, in a well-ventilated room.
- Take medicines on time and finish the course. Write each dose down.

Move

- Walk short distances often, every hour or two while awake. Moving helps prevent blood clots.
- After abdominal or keyhole surgery: lift nothing over **4 kg** and avoid straining your stomach muscles for **6 weeks**; no hard exercise for 2-4 weeks; no driving for at least 7-10 days ([Phyathai](#)).
- After joint surgery, follow your physio's rules exactly. See the [orthopedic guide](#) and the [knee guide](#).

Sleep

- Keep the phone, water and medicines within reach of the bed.
- Get up slowly, especially at night, and switch on a light first.

Wash

- Keyhole wounds are often covered with waterproof plasters, so you may shower. If the dressing is **not** waterproof, keep it dry until your follow-up ([Phyathai](#)).
- Use a shower chair for the first days; no bath, pool or sea until your surgeon says the wound has healed.

Eat and drink

- Water, fruit and vegetables help prevent constipation from painkillers ([Srisawan Hospital](#)).

12. When to call

Call 1669 now (or your hospital's emergency line) if you:

- are short of breath or have chest pain, especially with a swollen leg. This can be a clot in the lung ([Ratchaphruek Hospital](#), [Phyathai](#)).
- faint, cannot be woken properly or are newly confused
- are bleeding heavily through the dressing

- have fallen and cannot get up, or have hit your head

How to call 1669: say "English" when connected ([calling 1669](#)), give what happened, your exact address and a callback number, and don't hang up until told to ([Bumrungrad](#)). If you struggle, hand the phone to hotel staff or call the Tourist Police on 1155.

Keep your address in Thai by the phone:

"ต้องการรถพยาบาล ผม/ฉันเพิ่งผ่าตัด ที่อยู่คือ [hotel name in Thai], [street], ห้อง [room], เบอร์โทร [your number]" (I need an ambulance. I just had surgery. The address is ...)

Call your surgeon's clinic today if you notice:

- a fever over **38°C** ([Phyathai](#))
- a wound that is red, hot, swollen, oozing or smells
- pain that gets worse instead of better, or isn't helped by your painkillers
- pain, swelling or redness in **one** calf ([Ratchaphruek Hospital](#))
- vomiting, a swollen tight stomach, or no bowel movement for several days
- missed or doubled doses, or dizziness when standing

Note it and mention it at your follow-up:

- bruising around the wound
- mild swelling that goes down with rest
- tiredness

[A caregiver checks these signs with you every day →](#)

13. Flying home

- Get your **Fit for Travel certificate** at your last follow-up, timed to your flight ([valid 7 days at Bumrungrad](#)).
- Collect your **medical summary** and a medicine list for your doctor at home.
- Ask the airline for a **wheelchair** and an aisle or extra-legroom seat if you need it ([Ratchaphruek Hospital](#)).
- Keep medicines in hand luggage. Walk the aisle and flex your feet about every 30 minutes; drink water; no alcohol on painkillers.
- Need someone at the airport? Elder Thai offers [medical escort transport](#) to the terminal.

14. Mistakes people make

- **Booking the return flight for the week after surgery.** Keep it flexible.
- **Comparing package prices that don't apply to you.** Check "Thai and expats only" lines.
- **Assuming the package covers everything.** Tests, complications and medicines are often extra.
- **Arriving with a 30-day visa for a 3-month recovery.**
- **Picking a hotel for the view, not the bathroom.**
- **Leaving hospital without the instructions in writing.**
- **Spending the first night alone after struggling to reach the toilet.**

15. You'll know it's going well when...

- your pain is a little less every few days
- the wound is dry and redness is shrinking
- you can walk a bit further each day
- you can manage the toilet, shower and your medicines alone
- your follow-up and flight dates are confirmed

If any of these goes the other way, call your surgeon's clinic.

16. Get a caregiver: Elder Thai after-surgery care

Recovering alone after surgery in Thailand is possible. It is also where small things slip: a missed dose, a fall on the way to the bathroom, a fever nobody notices.

Elder Thai sends a trained, bilingual caregiver to your hotel, condo or serviced apartment, working to a plan set by our [Nurse Coordinator](#).

What your caregiver does:

- meets you at discharge and goes through your instructions with you
- keeps your medicine schedule and a written log
- checks temperature and vital signs daily and watches the wound ([post-op monitoring](#))
- helps you shower, dress and get to the toilet safely
- brings meals, does light laundry and shopping
- takes you to follow-up visits and speaks Thai with staff ([hospital companion](#), [medical interpreter](#))
- tells the Nurse Coordinator early if something looks wrong

Shifts and backup: caregivers work in shifts, so a long day or round-the-clock care is shared between caregivers rather than one tired person. A **replacement caregiver is always ready** if yours is sick or off.

What we do not do: replace your surgeon or hospital. Registered nurses handle clinical tasks such as injections or complex dressings ([wound care at home](#), [private nurse at home](#)).

Pricing: you choose hours per day and number of days. There is no fixed package.

Hours per day	4 hours	8 hours	12 hours	24 hours
Price per day (THB)	1,200	2,200	2,500	3,500

Example (illustrative): after keyhole surgery, 8 hours on discharge day and the next 2 days, then 4 hours a day for 4 days = $3 \times 2,200 + 4 \times 1,200 = 11,400$ THB. After a joint replacement, many people choose [overnight care](#) for the first nights.

Where: Bangkok, Pattaya, Phuket and Chiang Mai.

How to start: send us your operation, hospital, surgery date and where you will stay. Plan before you fly and we will be ready on discharge day.

[Request after-surgery care](#) · WhatsApp **+66 62 837 0302** · LINE · hello@elderthai.com

17. FAQs

Is it safe to get surgery in Thailand? Thailand's large private hospitals are accredited by JCI and by Thailand's own HA programme. Check both on the [JCI](#) and [HA](#) registers, and check your surgeon on the [Medical Council register](#).

How much does surgery cost in Thailand? Published 2026 packages run from about 119,000 THB for keyhole gallbladder removal to 745,000 THB for both knees replaced robotically ([section 3](#)). Ask whether the package is open to fly-in patients.

Do I have to pay before surgery? Usually, yes, unless your insurer sends a guarantee letter. Bumrungrad asks for a [full deposit](#) for self-pay procedures.

Can I have surgery in Thailand alone? Yes. Plan who helps on discharge day and the first nights before you fly ([section 5](#)).

How long should I stay after surgery? Until your surgeon clears you to fly: often about a week after keyhole surgery, and much longer after a joint replacement ([section 6](#)).

Which visa do I need for surgery in Thailand? It depends on your passport and how long you'll recover. Ask [Thai Kru](#).

Printable checklist

Print this, keep it by the bed, and tick things off. The PDF fits on one A4 page, with emergency numbers and space for your address in Thai.

Printable one-page checklist: [download the PDF](#).

Sources

- [Bumrungrad: patient finance and insurance](#)
- [Bumrungrad: medical travel guide, discharge and insurance process, hotels nearby, emergency](#)
- [Healthcare Accreditation Institute \(HA\) certificate status](#)
- [Medical Council of Thailand: check a doctor](#)
- [Bangkok Hospital: hip and knee packages, abdominal surgery packages, fly-in robotic knee package, Chiang Mai FAQ \(deposit\)](#)
- [Phyathai: keyhole gallbladder package, hernia package, knee package, care after keyhole surgery](#)
- [Vichaiyut: gallbladder package; Navavej: gallbladder package; MedPark: hernia package; Piyavate: robotic knee package; Samitivej: robotic knee and hip; Ratchaphruek: knee package and after knee replacement](#)
- [Thai visa sources: PRD, immigration fees, Thai embassy KL, Thai embassy Budapest, thailand.go.th, Thai e-Visa DTV; Thai Kru](#)
- [KIN: home physio and equipment rental](#)

For comparison (foreign guidance):

- [UK Civil Aviation Authority: surgical conditions and flying](#)
- [Joint Commission International: accredited organisations](#)