

Choosing a Doctor or Health Care Provider

Finding the right doctor or health care provider for you is a big part of your medical care. Don't wait until you get sick to find one. When you look for or change doctors, follow these tips:

- Look for one who accepts your health plan. Check with the plan. Ask the person at work who handles employee benefits.
- If you belong to a managed care plan, get a list of providers who work with the plan. Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) and Preferred Provider Organizations (PPOs) are two types of managed care plans. The doctor(s) you see now may be on your HMO or PPO list.
- Ask relatives and friends for doctors they trust and have given them good medical care.
- Find out if a doctor is taking new patients. Check with your health plan. Call the doctor's office.
- Look for a doctor you can relate to. How do you want medical decisions to be made? The doctor alone? You and the doctor together? Find one that meets your needs.



Make a list of things you want in a doctor or provider, such as close location, certain gender, age, etc.

- Ask about office hours and staffing. Ask how many patients are scheduled to be seen in an hour and how long they usually wait to see the doctor.
- Ask how payment is handled. Must you pay at the time of your visit or can you be billed?
- Find out what other providers serve as backups when the doctor is away. Ask what you should do at non-office hour times.
- Find out which hospital(s) the doctor or provider sends patients to.
- Look for a doctor who is competent and can care for all your general health needs. Ask if and who the doctor will refer you to for any special health needs.



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