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Preventive Health

Primary care and your health

Did you know that people with a primary care provider (PCP) often spend less time in the hospital? A PCP plays an important role in your healthcare. A long-term relationship with a PCP may help you stay healthy and lower your medical costs in the long run. They can treat you when you're sick and help you get more advanced care when you need it. Finding the right provider takes time, but it is an important step toward developing a relationship with a healthcare provider whom you trust.

Many people stay with their PCP for years. Over time, your provider should become familiar with your health risks and family history. This allows them to better serve your healthcare needs and deliver more personal care. They are trained to handle all aspects of healthcare, but may send you to a specialist if your condition calls for more focused care. Although you may need a specialist, your PCP is still an important member of your healthcare team. Specialists and PCPs work together to develop treatment plans that are right for you.

Your PCP is your first stop for preventive care services. They can provide routine physicals and immunizations. They may also recommend wellness screenings based on your risks. They can diagnose common illnesses and chronic conditions like diabetes, obesity, and high blood pressure. These services can help you catch issues early when treatment is most effective. Primary care providers aren't always doctors. They can also be nurses or physician assistants.

Primary care providers often help you make lifestyle changes to feel your best. They can look at your risks and let you know about changes you need to make. A PCP can give you complete care over your lifespan. Talk to your insurance provider to find a primary care provider covered by your insurance plan.



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Finding a Primary Care Provider (PCP)

If you don't have a primary care provider or are not at ease with the one you currently see, now may be the time to find a new one. Whether you just moved to a new city, changed insurance providers, or had a bad experience, it is worthwhile to take the time to find a health provider you trust. Use the steps below to begin your search.

1. Find a list of providers covered by your health insurance. Many insurance companies have resources to help you find an in-network primary care provider. Begin your search with this list of covered providers.
2. Decide what you are looking for in a health provider. List the qualities that matter to you. Do you care if your doctor is a man or a woman? Is it important that your health provider has evening office hours? Do you have specific language needs?

My qualifications:

3. Make a list of several possible health providers. Once you have a general sense of what you are looking for, ask friends and relatives for the names of health providers with whom they have had good experiences.

Provider name	Phone number	Notes

4. Collect information about the providers you are considering. Once you have narrowed your list to two or three providers, call their offices. The office staff is a good source of information about the provider's education and qualifications, office policies, and payment procedures. They may be able to provide insight on telehealth services and other communication methods.
5. Choose a provider. Schedule an annual visit with the new provider. Pay attention to the way you communicate during the visit and how you feel. Ask the healthcare provider questions to help determine if they are the right fit for you.

My new PCP is _____ My appointment date and time: _____

Consider these [guidelines](#) to determine which screenings or immunizations you may need.
Use this [site](#) to find information about the health providers in your area.
Use this tool to find a [list](#) of providers who participate in Medicare programs.