

Tips for Choosing a Doctor

1 Make a List of Care Wants & Needs

Before selecting a doctor, you should set ideas for the kind of primary care provider (PCP) you're looking for:

- Should they be male or female?
- How far are you willing to travel?
- Do you have any conditions that require specialized care?

2 Know Who Provides Primary Care

There are many types of PCPs, but here are some common options to choose from:

- **Family Practitioner:** certified to care for people of all ages (infant to elderly).
- **Internist:** certified to care for adults at any age; one of the most commonly chosen PCPs.
- **Geriatrician:** specializes in care for older patients experiencing medical issues related to aging.
- **Nurse Practitioner (NP):** advanced practice registered nurse that is well-equipped to carry out a vast majority of primary care procedures.
- **Pediatrician:** certified to provide primary care services to children from their birth until the age of 21.
- **Gynecologist:** provides specialty care for women and although they are qualified to act as a PCP, most patients see their OB-GYN in addition to their primary care provider.
- **Physician Assistant (PA):** not fully certified in primary care, however, they are familiar with and qualified in providing many primary care practices.

3 Check Healthcare Databases

Healthcare databases can help you to narrow down a list of available primary care providers in your area:

- [American Medical Association's Doctor Finder website](#)
- [List of Directories from MedlinePlus](#)
- [Medicare Physician Compare tool](#)

4 Call Your Insurance Provider

Before deciding on a provider, you should call your insurance provider to ensure that the PCP is in-network. You should also call your new primary care practice to ensure that they take your insurance.

5 Speak With Family & Friends

Asking family or friends for local provider recommendations is a great way to hear honest thoughts on various local PCPs.

6 Call the Primary Care Office

A great way to get to know a potential primary care practice is by calling their office and interacting with their team. While on the phone, you may want to ask questions such as:

- Is this primary care provider accepting new patients?
- Are weekend or after-hour appointments available?
- Are translators provided if needed?
- Is transportation provided if needed?
- If my primary care provider is not available, who will I discuss my care with?
- Does this provider have expertise or experience dealing with xyz condition/disease?

7 Check Their Board Certification

It's important to check the American Board of Medical Specialties when selecting a PCP that specializes in:

- Internal medicine
- Family medicine
- Geriatrics
- Gynecology
- Orthopedics
- Other specialty areas of medicine

8 Route the Trip

Location plays a large role in your healthcare because you want a provider that's local and convenient to get to. Some ideas to consider:

- How far is the office from home?
- Is the office in a rural or metropolitan area?
- What mode of transportation is needed to get to the office (car, public transport, rideshare services, etc.)?

10 Research Patient Forums

You can see how certain providers are being rated by their patients through online forums and review pages.

11 Meet the Provider

Meeting the provider and speaking with them in person is the best way to get to know if they're the right fit for your needs. Pay attention to:

- Their tone of voice
- Their ability to listen
- Their body language

Red flags when meeting a provider is feeling that they're:

- Rushing through the visit
- Cutting off your questions or concerns
- Not listening to your care needs
- Speaking to you in condescending or negative tones