

Selecting the Right Provider

Nearly 25% of American adults do not have a primary health care provider whom they regularly receive care from according to the National Health Care Quality Report, 2010.

Individuals with a primary care provider have several advantages when using the health care system. These individuals tend to have greater trust in their provider when there is an established relationship and also experience better provider-patient communication. These factors increase the likelihood that patients will receive appropriate and timely care when needed. By learning about patients' diverse health care needs over time, a primary care provider can coordinate care (e.g., visits to specialists) to better meet patients' needs. Bottom line, having a primary care provider correlates with receipt of higher quality care.

Selecting a primary care provider is an important step in taking care of your health and health care needs.

Your primary care provider is the professional you usually see for general health problems. When choosing, you will need to decide if you want to select a medical doctor, general or family practitioner, an internist, doctor of osteopathic medicine, advanced nurse practitioner, or physician's assistant.

"Never go to a doctor whose office plants have died."

Erma Bombeck

Ask others for recommendations. Do you know a good primary care provider? Would you recommend your primary care provider? What do you like about him/her? How long does it take to get an appointment? Can you usually see your primary care provider right away if you need to, like on the same day if you get sick?

Consider the office location and whether or not it will be convenient and accessible for you. Is there ample parking or public transportation nearby?

Verify that the provider is in good standing with the state's medical board and is board certified.

Inquire about the services (lab, x-ray, etc) offered at the office and which hospitals extend privileges to the provider.

Find out who you will see when the provider is unavailable.

Meet the staff and be certain that they seem caring, compassionate, patient knowledgeable, and friendly.

Ask about the average wait time for an appointment.

Check with your insurance company to determine if the provider is in your network and if the hospital(s) the provider is affiliated with is also covered.

Visit with the provider to determine if he/she answers questions thoroughly, takes time to understand your concerns, and has good bedside manners.