

# SELECTING A HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

## Taking Charge of Your Health Care

Choosing a doctor or another type of health professional is very important. The relationship you have with your health professional greatly influences the health decisions you make and, ultimately, your health. Use the information below to help you select a doctor that is right for you.

**Ask for recommendations from others.** Ask family, friends, or neighbors if they have a doctor they like and why. If your doctor is moving or retiring, ask them for a recommendation to a colleague they trust.

**Check with your insurance.** You can search for a doctor based on who is in your network online or by calling your insurance company. You can search by specialty, gender, language, and much more to help you narrow down your search to someone who meets your specifications.

**Consider the advantages of a primary care physician or provider (PCP).** A PCP can be a good first point of contact for health care questions. They can provide preventive care, give treatment for common conditions, help to assess urgent medical issues, and make referrals to specialists if appropriate. You also have the benefit of consistency with a PCP, developing a relationship over time where they can understand your health issues and lifestyle.

**Research the doctor and medical office.** In most cases, you can search online for complaints against the doctor or the office. You can also see if they are accepting new patients and other important details such as where they do lab work or hospital affiliations. Use the below as resources:

- › **Administrators in Medicine:** [administratorsinmedicine.org](https://www.administratorsinmedicine.org)  
Provides information about disciplinary actions in many states.
- › **American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS):** [www.certificationmatters.org](https://www.certificationmatters.org)  
Search for doctors who are experts in their chosen specialties.

### Factors to consider

- › **Network status:** Choosing in-network providers can help you save money.
- › **Location:** Is it easy to get to, near your work or home?
- › **Hospitals used:** Does your insurance cover care provided there?
- › **X-rays, lab tests:** Are these performed in-office or at an outside lab?
- › **Availability:** How long will it take to get an appointment? Are weekend, evening appointments available?
- › **Atmosphere, attitude:** Do the staff treat you with respect? Are they friendly and courteous?
- › **Responsiveness:** Do they respond to your concerns quickly?
- › **Specialties, experience:** Do they have special training or certifications?
- › **Flexible care options.** Are virtual appointments an option?
- › **Reputation:** Are they well-regarded, recommended by others?

#### References:

U.S. Office of Disease Prevention & Health Promotion (OASH) (2023, January 6) *Choosing a Doctor: Quick Tips*. <https://health.gov/myhealthfinder/doctor-visits/regular-checkups/choosing-doctor-quick-tips>

WebMD (2021, December 13) *How to Choose a Doctor*. <https://www.webmd.com/health-insurance/how-to-choose-a-doctor>

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