

Tips on Choosing a Doctor



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Your doctor will be your partner in care, so it is important to choose carefully from the doctors available to you. In some managed care plans, you will generally be limited to choosing from only certain doctors; in other plans, some doctors may be "preferred," which means they are part of a network and you will pay less if you use them. Ask your plan or us for a list or directory of providers. The plan may also offer other help in choosing.

You can ask doctors that you know, medical societies, friends, family, and coworkers to recommend doctors. You may also contact hospitals and referral services about doctors in your area.

Once you have the names of doctors who interest you, make sure they are accepting new patients. Here's how to check doctors out:

- Ask plans and medical offices for information on their doctors' training and experience.
- Look up basic information about doctors in the Directory of Medical Specialists, available at your local library. This reference has up-to-date professional and biographic information on about 400,000 practicing physicians.
- Use "AMA Physician Select," which is the American Medical Association's free service on the Internet for information about physicians.
<http://www.ama-assn.org/aps/amahg.htm>.

You may also want to find out:

- Is the doctor board certified? Although all doctors must be licensed to practice medicine, some also are board certified. This means the doctor has completed several years of training in a specialty and passed an exam. Call the American Board of Medical Specialties at 800-776-2378 for more information.
- Have complaints been registered or disciplinary actions taken against the doctor? To find out, call your State Medical Licensing Board. Ask Directory Assistance for the phone number.
- Have complaints been registered with your State department of insurance? (Not all departments of insurance accept complaints.) Ask Directory Assistance for the phone number.

Once you have narrowed your search to a few doctors, you may want to set up "get acquainted" appointments with them. Ask what charge there might be for these visits, if any. Such appointments give you a chance to interview the doctors—for example, to find out if they have much experience with any health conditions you may have.

Please feel free to contact me. I would be happy to answer any questions regarding the worth or effectiveness of your current insurance coverages.

Thanks,

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