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7 Things to Consider When Choosing a Doctor

You deserve the best of care

Having a doctor you know and trust is an important part of staying healthy. And once you find the right one, it's a big decision to switch.

Yet, choosing a doctor doesn't have to be a chore.

At Providence, we want to ensure you have the information you need to choose a doctor that meets your needs. This guide is full of expert advice that can help you pick the right doctor for you—and help you be your healthiest.

So, where do you start?

A good way to begin your search for a new doctor is by researching online. This will help you get basic information. But don't just limit your information to what you find online. Talk to friends, family and anyone whose opinion you respect. Health care professionals, like doctors or nurses, are another great source for a referral.

Common Reasons Why People Switch Doctors

- Not getting the care or attention they need
- Doctor is retiring
- Health care plan benefits are changing
- Current doctor doesn't accept Medicare



7 Things to Consider When Choosing a Doctor

#1: Health Insurance Acceptance

Certain Medicare plans may not offer all the health coverage you need and could limit your options for choosing a doctor. Make sure your new doctor accepts your health plan. Learn more by reading the How to Switch Doctors section at the end of this guide.

#2: Location, Accessibility and Availability

For your convenience, your new doctor should be located within a reasonable driving distance. Plus, they should make it easy to get an appointment. Here are some questions to get answered as you do your research:

- *Is the doctor available for a same-day appointment?*
- *What happens if I need care after hours?*
- *Will I have to pay for parking?*
- *Does the office have imaging and lab services located on-site or nearby?*

Call the office to say you're a new patient and determine when you should schedule your first appointment.

#3: Your Care Team

Quality health care is a team effort. Aside from your doctor, it'll be important to know if there are other providers you may see instead. It might be a nurse practitioner, physician assistant or registered nurse. Each plays an important role in overseeing your health and making you feel comfortable throughout.

Also, ask about referrals to specialists. Depending on your insurance, seeing a specialist may require an authorization.



#4: Access to a Comprehensive Health System

It takes an integrated network of doctors and hospitals to keep people healthy in the long run. That's why you should find out what specialists, hospitals, programs and other services your doctor uses in case you need them.

#5: Senior Focus

Family, internal and geriatric medicine doctors are all trained to treat seniors. Your health status and complexity of medical conditions may determine if a family, internal or geriatric medicine specialized doctor is the right fit for you.

If you do have complex medical conditions, ask if your doctor offers additional support like a nurse care manager.

#6: Holistic Care

True health is about "the whole you"—mind, body and spirit. As you continue your search, consider whether the doctor's care philosophy aligns with your social and emotional health needs, as well as your faith and values.

At your first appointment ...

Before your first visit, it's hard to know for sure if the doctor you're considering is right for you in every way. So, once you do see him or her face-to-face, consider this:

#7: Personality, Manner and "Chemistry"

Throughout your first appointment, note if you're treated with courtesy, respect and dignity by both doctor and staff. Consider what's most important to you and ask these questions: Does the doctor balance clinical skill with a human touch? Does he or she make strong eye contact and have good listening skills? Do you feel you can trust what he or she says? Don't hesitate to keep looking if the fit isn't right.



Questions to Ask Your Doctor During Your First Visit

- ✔ How does my family history impact my personal health?
- ✔ How are my vital signs?
- ✔ Can I tell you about a typical day of mine to see if there are ways I can be more proactive in leading a healthy lifestyle?
- ✔ How should I communicate with you in between appointments?
- ✔ Am I due for a physical exam or any preventive screenings?
- ✔ Is there anything specific I need to know about the medications I'm taking?
- ✔ Should I schedule a follow-up appointment?
- ✔ How should I request a prescription refill?

Why choose a Providence doctor?

- Compassionate, personalized care
- More than 1,600 top-tier primary care and specialty doctors
- Award-winning hospitals



How to Switch Doctors

#1: Choose a Health Plan

Selecting the right health plan is like building a house. Price is a factor. But the quality and breadth of coverage is more important. Think about your current and possible future medical needs, and ask yourself:

- *How often do you need to visit the doctor now?*
- *What is the extent of coverage and cost-sharing?*
- *Do you expect to have any surgeries soon?*
- *Does the plan cover prescription drugs?*
- *How will it cover medical emergencies?*

Most importantly, make sure your plan includes Providence's network of doctors and hospitals.

#2: Choose a Doctor

Depending on your current situation, and the type of health plan you have, you may not need to wait for open enrollment periods to change doctors. If your health plan requires you to select a primary care doctor, it generally will allow you to change your doctor or network every month.

It's not only important to choose a primary care doctor who meets your needs, but one who's also connected to a network of top-tier specialists and hospitals so you'll have the best safety net in case you need one.

#3: Choose a Hospital

Some health plans require you to choose a hospital or health care network up front. Others do not. And since many primary care doctors participate in multiple networks that include different specialists and hospitals, it's important that you select both the doctor and the network of your choosing. Check your plan's details to be sure your choice includes a Providence doctor.

Even if your health plan doesn't require selecting a hospital, be sure your primary care doctor and his or her specialists have access to the best hospitals in case you need next-level care.

Providence is always here to help

We know switching doctors is a big decision. That's why Providence is always here to guide you. With our network of top-tier doctors and award-winning hospitals delivering personalized, compassionate care, we have everything you need to be healthy.