

5 TIPS TO CHOOSE A NEW PRIMARY CARE DOCTOR

Your primary care doctor is your medical “home.” This is the doctor you visit for most medical needs, such as wellness visits and routine screenings, non-emergency illnesses like earaches and sore throats, and the person you speak to about your health questions and concerns. If you have an HMO, your primary care doctor will also be the person who sends you to see a specialist.

Why would I need to choose a new primary care doctor?

- new health insurance plan
- moved
- ready for a change

Here are five tips to help you choose a new primary care doctor.

1 FIND OUT WHICH DOCTORS ARE “IN NETWORK”

Most health plans have special rates with certain doctors and hospitals in your area. These are your “in network” doctors. You will pay less out of pocket by choosing one of these doctors. If you choose a doctor that is not “in network,” you will have to pay an “out of network” charge or may even have to pay in full if the doctor does not take your insurance plan. To find a list of “in network” doctors and hospitals, call the 1-800 number on the back of your member ID card.

2 FIND A DOCTOR WITH EXPERTISE THAT MEETS YOUR HEALTH NEEDS

Start with the list of in network doctors. There are several different types of doctor that can give you primary care. These will usually be family practice, internal medicine or general practice.

3 ASK FOR REFERRALS

Many people feel most comfortable visiting a doctor who is suggested by someone they know. Ask a family member, neighbor, co-worker or friend to see which doctor they go to and what they like and dislike. You can also ask other health care experts with whom you have a relationship, like a specialty doctor, pharmacist, or dentist for a recommendation.

4 THINK ABOUT LOGISTICS

Where is the doctor's office? Do you want a doctor that is close to your home or office?

Use your insurance company's "doctor directory" or "provider finder" to search for doctors with an office close by for you to visit.

What time and days is the office open?
Will you need to take time off work to visit the office, or can you go after work or on weekends?

Which hospital does the doctor send patients to if they need hospital services?
What language does the doctor and his staff speak?

Language is another important factor to check. You need to be able to communicate clearly with your doctor, so check which languages he or she speaks to be sure you'll be able to understand each other.

How can I stay in touch with my doctor?

Many doctors now use email or an online portal to communicate with patients.

5 VISIT THE DOCTOR

Nothing can really give you a feel for whether you've chosen the right doctor like an office visit and a face-to-face meeting. Be sure you feel at ease with the doctor and nurses.

Your primary care doctor should be someone you trust and can count on to help care for your health. Talk with him or her about any medicines you are taking. Go over your medical history to be sure you and your doctor have all the information needed. Ask for support with any chronic conditions.

If for any reason you are not happy with your choice, most insurance plans allow for you to change your primary care doctor any time during the plan year (contact your plan directly for details).

TAKE ACTION!

- Call your insurance plan today and speak with a member services representative who can link you to a primary care doctor.
- If you have Medi-Cal, you will receive information by mail from Health Care Options to select a health plan and a primary care doctor. Please contact your City of Hope financial counselor to assist you with information on health plans contracted with City of Hope.
- If you have Medicare and need to find a primary care doctor, contact your local hospital that has emergency room services and ask for their referral line for primary care doctors.
- Remember to contact your financial counselor at City of Hope prior to making **ANY** changes to your medical plan/insurance. Call **626-256-4673** and ask for **Financial Support Services** for more information.