

## ► Think About how to Coordinate Everything

Do you want a doctor located close to your home or office? Search for doctors with an office location that is convenient for you. When searching, also think about office hours and what days and times the doctor is available for appointments. Will you need to take time off work to visit the office or can you go after work or on weekends? It is also a good idea to check what hospital the doctor uses to admit patients.

Language and how the doctor communicates follow-up instructions are important factors to consider. You need to be able to communicate clearly with your doctor, so check which languages he or she speaks to ensure you will be able to understand each other. A lot of doctors are now using email or an online portal to communicate with their patients. This may be an item of importance to tech-savvy communicators when selecting a physician or may be a problem for older individuals who are not used to communicating that way.

## ► Set up a Visit with the Doctor

Nothing can reassure you more that you have selected the right doctor like an office visit and a face-to-face meeting. This allows you to meet your providers and the administrative staff and build a relationship with them. Your primary care physician should be someone you trust and can rely on to help manage your healthcare. Discuss any current medications you are taking and your medical history to be sure you are on the same page when it comes to managing any chronic conditions.

## ► Caregiver Support

It might be recommended to have someone accompany an older individual to their doctor appointments such as a caregiver, friend, or relative. This individual can offer emotional and transportation support, as well as act as another set of ears to hear what the doctor recommends and another set of eyes to read any written instructions.

Prior to any appointments, the caregiver and older individual should consider what they want to achieve during the visit.

- ✓ Are there new symptoms or concerns to report?
- ✓ Is there anything that needs explanation or review?
- ✓ For example: You want to clear up any confusion about medications and questions about their effectiveness or side effects.

## What to Take Away from the Visit

Bring a list of your medications and questions to the appointment, along with paper and pen to record information.

After the visit, compare notes to confirm that everyone understands and can follow through with the doctor's recommendations. Feel free to contact the doctor's office if there are still any questions or misunderstandings.

Finally, keep a folder for notes from your appointments and make sure your loved ones know where this is stored and have access to it. It is important to retain this information to refer to during future doctor visits or emergency care.

## References:

*The benefits of seeing a doctor regularly.* Bethesda Health Group. (2021, September 27). Retrieved September 16, 2022, from <https://bethesdahealth.org/blog/2021/10/06/benefits-seeing-doctor-regularly/>

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# Self care



## Making Your Health a Priority



## The Benefits of Seeing a Doctor Routinely

Seeing a doctor regularly is a fundamental investment for your health. Routine examinations detect problems early when they are more treatable. This is most significant for older adults, as susceptibility to illness increases with age.

People at any age should get a yearly checkup, even if nothing seems wrong. This visit gives the doctor a chance to monitor a patient's health and compare their wellness to their last visit. This is particularly important for seniors, who tend to have chronic and complicated health concerns.

When a doctor routinely sees their patient, they can make better diagnoses based on observing the changes in that patient's health. When a physician has a good understanding of their patient's health history, they are more effective in managing that patient's chronic disease.



### What is 'Routinely?'



#### There is no one way to schedule doctor visits that works for everyone.

Dynamics such as age and health decide how often a visit is needed. An annual visit is recommended at minimum

Patients should consider the following:

- ✓ On your most recent visit, did your physician advise a date for your return?
- ✓ Did you schedule the return visit?
- ✓ Has your health status changed since your last visit?

## Which Doctor is Right for You? ▶▶▶▶▶

Whether you have changed insurance coverage, recently moved, or are just ready for a change, selecting a primary care physician is an important first step toward managing your health. Your primary care doctor is your medical "home." It is the person you call on for most medical needs, including wellness visits and routine screenings, non-emergency illnesses, and the person you speak to about your health questions and concerns.

Some individuals find a primary care physician and stay with them for decades, while others will be short-lived. No matter how long you plan to see your primary care physician, the relationship is an important one. You will want to select someone you feel comfortable having straightforward conversations with, and someone with knowledge in the areas that meet your healthcare needs. If you rely on your health insurance, be sure to select an "in-network" provider. Out of network and concierge providers may have more out of pocket costs.

Here are some tips for choosing a primary care physician that is right for you:

### ▶ Determine Which Doctors Are "In-Network"

Most health plans have negotiated special, discounted rates with certain doctors and hospitals in your area, which allows you to pay less out of pocket for visiting those doctors. These doctors are considered "in-network" for insurance purposes. Ensuring that you select an "in-network" doctor will help you avoid a surprise "out-of-network" charge or having to pay in full out of your pocket due to the doctor you picked not accepting your insurance plan.

### ▶ Find a Doctor With the Expertise for Your Health Needs

Once you have the list of in-network providers, you can begin the process of selecting a primary care physician. There are several different types of doctors that will be classified as a primary care physicians (*Family Practice, Internal Medicine, or General Practice*). There are also doctors who focus solely on children, Pediatricians, who will serve as the primary care physician for your child.



- ✓ **Family Practice** – this type of physician can treat patients of all ages, from newborns to the elderly. They are generalists who can treat a wide variety of conditions, and often can also treat ailments you would normally see a specialist for, like sports injuries or some women's health needs.
- ✓ **Internal Medicine** – this type of physician usually treats adults and specializes in prevention, diagnosis and management of disease and chronic conditions.
- ✓ **General Practice** – this type of physician is similar to a family practice physician and can treat patients of any gender or age. This category is one area where you might also find osteopaths, which are physicians that practice a type of alternative medicine with special focus on the musculoskeletal system, and are distinguished by the "D.O." after their name instead of "M.D."

### ▶ Get Referrals

People usually feel comfortable visiting a physician who is recommended by someone they know, like a family member, co-worker, or friend. Ask those close to you that you trust, what doctor they prefer. You can also ask another healthcare professional with whom you have a good relationship for a recommendation. If you are switching physicians due to moving, ask your current doctor if they have any recommendations for doctors in your new area.

