

**Choosing a  
PRIMARY CARE  
PROVIDER**



## Choosing a Primary Care Provider

**At any age, having a primary care provider (also called a PCP) is important to good health.**

### **Your primary care provider is an advocate for your health.**

They are medical experts who will be there for **you**. When you have a health concern or injury, your primary care provider is there to help with the next steps for diagnosis or treatment, which could be a specialist follow-up, an X-ray, or blood work, for example.

### **Comfort is key.**

When **you** are comfortable it is easier to talk about health issues. Your primary care provider can get to know you and your health history. With time, trust is built, and they will understand you and your health care needs.

### **Your health is important.**

They can help catch problems early. Checking in on your health with your PCP can help **you** be healthier. Your provider really gets to know you through regular health checkups, screenings, sick visits, if you are injured, or have health issues like diabetes or a heart condition.



### **Did you know?**

Studies show that those engaged with a primary care provider have the ability to reduce health care costs.

#### **How?**

A primary care provider will help you coordinate care, avoid unnecessary testing, and decrease hospital visits. Having a primary care provider also improves health overall.<sup>1</sup>

# What does a PCP Do?

**A PCP is a health care professional who cares for both routine and chronic health needs.**

- Routine preventive health screenings including blood pressure, cholesterol check and more
- Illnesses such as strep throat, the flu or COVID-19
- Injuries such as sprains or strains
- Chronic conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease or arthritis
- Immunizations for flu, COVID-19 and childhood vaccinations
- Help with lifestyle changes such as nutrition, exercise or quitting smoking
- Identify steps for diagnosis or treatment (things like connecting with a specialist, an X-ray, blood work, etc.)



## There are so many types of doctors – which ones provide primary care?

Providers can either be a Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) or Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.). They are both medically trained professionals who can serve as a primary care provider and specialize in any of the areas described below:

### **Pediatricians**

Specialize in the care of babies and children.

### **Family medicine doctors**

Provide care for the whole family, from birth to old age.

### **Internal medicine-pediatrics doctors**

Trained in internal medicine and pediatrics and can care for children and adults.

### **Internists**

Provide care for adults of all ages.

## Did you know?

Other medical providers who treat and coordinate all aspects of a person's health care can also be primary care providers:

- **Geriatricians** can coordinate care for older adults.
- **Obstetrician-gynecologists (OB/GYNs)** diagnose and treat women's reproductive health, including pregnancy and childbirth.
- **Nurse practitioners (N.P.) and physician assistants (P.A.)** have advanced education and training in diagnosing and treating medical conditions. They are also able to provide primary care for children and adults.



# Finding the Right Provider and “Fit”

**Your primary care provider should be a person you feel comfortable with. Who you trust with your care is a personal choice and an important one.**

## Do Your Research

Ask friends, family or a health care provider for recommendations. Ask yourself if there are ‘must haves’ that make you most comfortable and will provide the best access to get the care you need.

### For example:

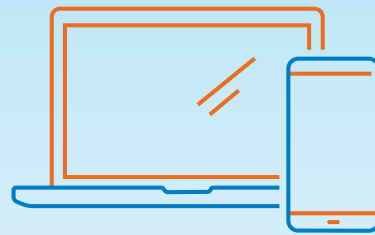
- Gender, age, race, or languages spoken
- Wheelchair accessibility
- Location or telehealth options
- Days or hours available

## Before you make an appointment:

- Check if the provider accepts your insurance and is accepting new patients.
- Visit the provider’s website to learn about the provider’s care approach.
- Set up a consultation if the provider offers this option before becoming a patient. This can help you decide whether the health care provider seems like a good fit for you.

## Make Your Health a Priority with FREE Preventive Care

- Your plan includes FREE preventive care, screenings, and immunizations with a participating provider.
- The best time to start taking care of your health is before you get sick.



**Visit [ExcellusBCBS.com/PreventiveCare](https://www.excellusbcbs.com/PreventiveCare) for a checklist of recommended screenings for your age.**

**Need help finding a provider? Use the Find a Doctor online search tool at [ExcellusBCBS.com/Find-A-Doctor](https://www.excellusbcbs.com/Find-A-Doctor)**

**Our customer care advocates are happy to help. Call the number on the back of your member card.**

<sup>1</sup> AAFP. (2018, October 22).

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