

Do I really need a primary care provider?



What is a primary care provider?

Why see a doctor if you are not sick? No matter your age, checking in on your health is important. A great first step is choosing a primary care provider (also called a PCP).

Your PCP can care for many health needs and is a champion for your health:

- 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
- Emotional wellbeing and mental health, including loneliness, irritability, sleep issues, anxiety or depression
- 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.)



Why do I need a primary care provider?

Seeing a provider regularly can make it easier to talk about health issues. They get to know you and your health history. They can help catch problems early.

Be sure to call your PCP whenever you believe you need medical care.

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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.

How do I find a primary care provider?

Before you look for a PCP, decide what type of health care provider you want, and whether there are any characteristics that are important to you such as gender, age, languages spoken, location of the practice or hours open. Once you have decided on what is most important to you in a health care provider, use these suggestions to help you find a PCP:

Do Your Research

- Ask friends, family or a health care provider for recommendations
- 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.



Are you looking for a provider?

Use the Find a Doctor online search tool at [ExcellusBCBS.com/find-a-doctor](https://www.excellusbcbs.com/find-a-doctor)

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Atención: Si habla español, contamos con ayuda gratuita de idiomas disponible para usted. Consulte el documento adjunto para ver las formas en que puede comunicarse con nosotros.

注意：如果您使用繁體中文，您可以免費獲得語言援助服務。請致電 1-877-883-9577 (TTY: 711)。

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