



Learn More – Module 3

Choosing the Right Doctor

Types of Primary Care Providers (PCPs)

A different PCP may be most appropriate for each family member.

Doctor/Physician (MD, DO)

- ◆ Went to medical school and trained in general medicine and/or a specialty.
- ◆ Primary care physicians include:
 - ◆ Family Practice (FP): cares for all ages from birth through old age. May also serve as OB in some practices
 - ◆ Internal Medicine (IM): cares for adults and sometimes older adolescents.
 - ◆ Pediatrics: cares for children from birth to early adulthood
 - ◆ Gynecology (GYN): Cares for women from adolescence through old age. Focuses on women's health issues.
 - ◆ Obstetrics/Gynecology (OB/GYN): Cares for women from adolescence through old age. Focuses on women's health issues including pregnancy.

TYPE 2: Nurse Practitioner (NP)

- ◆ Advanced practice nurse with Master's-level training and additional clinical work in order to provide primary care services.
- ◆ Can diagnose and, in most states, prescribe medication.

TYPE 3: Physician's Assistant (PA)

- ◆ Went to additional school and clinical work in order to provide primary care services with an MD.
- ◆ Can diagnose and, in most states, prescribe medication when co-signed by an MD.

Things to Consider When Choosing a Doctor

Look at the facts. Find out whether the doctor is board certified in areas relevant to your care. If you're planning to have a procedure, find out how many such procedures the doctor has performed.

Get references. Ask family, friends, and other doctors that you trust for their recommendations. Be aware that most doctors are expected to refer to others within the same network, so you may have to dig for truly unbiased recommendations.

Consider the doctor's "fit" with your priorities. For example, if you want to focus on managing

your health through better nutrition, look for a doctor who shares this focus. Or if you're concerned about staying active in sports through mid-life, ask how the doctor addresses these issues.

Trust your feelings. A successful doctor-patient relationship requires that you feel you can communicate openly with this person, and feel that he or she listens and understands you.