

Do I really need a primary care provider?



What is a primary care provider?

You may be asking yourself, why would I see a doctor if I am 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. You can set up time with your PCP to discuss:

- 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
- Identifying 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, and can help catch potential issues early, before they become more difficult and costly to treat.

Seeing your doctor, even if only once a year, is a good way to stay current on preventive screenings and discuss any issues you may be having. It also helps to be a current patient when you have an urgent need.

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

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Everybody Benefits

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

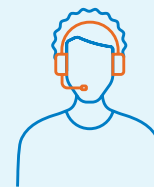
- Ask friends, family or a health care provider for recommendations
- Before you make an appointment:
 - » Check if the provider accepts your insurance and is accepting new patients.
 - » Visit the provider's website to learn about the provider's care approach.
 - » Set up a consultation if the provider offers this option before becoming a patient.



Do you need help finding a primary care provider or specialist?

Go to **ExcellusBCBS.com/Find-A-Doctor** and click on **"Find a Doctor, Provider or Facility."** You can do a general search or log in to your online member account for more specific results based on your plan.

Connect with Excellus BCBS Member Care Management. Our team of experienced health care and behavioral health specialists are here to help you get care and manage your health. Call us at **1-877-222-1240 (TTY 711)** Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET, Monday - Friday, or email us at **Case.Management@Excellus.com**



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