

Getting to Know You:

Tips for Choosing a Primary Care Provider



In healthcare, it's not *who you know* that matters, but *who knows you*. And the better your Primary Care Provider gets to know you, the better care he or she can provide.

But choosing a Primary Care Provider can be overwhelming. Where do you start? Which doctor is right for you? And how do you change doctors if it's just not working out?

Developing and maintaining a strong relationship with your Primary Care Provider is so important to your overall health that going through this process is well worth the effort. Here are a few tips to get you started.

Why It's So Important

A Primary Care Provider is a doctor who is specially trained to provide comprehensive preventive and ongoing healthcare. Primary Care Providers can be family medicine practitioners, internal medicine specialists, pediatricians, or obstetricians/gynecologists (OB/GYN). Primary Care Providers work with a care team – nurses, physician assistants and nurse practitioners – to take care of you and your family.

According to **Saleem Shamsee, MD, Family Medicine (with Obstetrics), at Dean's Riverview Clinic**, "A primary care provider is someone who can take care of the whole body – the whole person – and not just the current condition."

Julie Waraksa, MD, Pediatrics, at Dean's Northview Clinic agrees. "We're designed to not only help you feel better, but help you stay healthy and possibly even prevent future illness. It's a real partnership."

Some advantages of having an established Primary Care Provider include:

- Staying healthier with regular maintenance
- Keeping all health information in one place
- Reducing urgent care and emergency room visits

In contrast, always seeing a different doctor can have a negative impact on your health.

"If you 'doctor hop,' no one really knows what's going on with you," says Dr. Waraksa. "That can have some negative consequences, especially when it comes to something like drug interactions."

Who to Choose

Each specialty has its own benefits that may appeal to different people for different reasons. A basic summary might help you narrow your search:

FAMILY MEDICINE

(with or without Obstetrics)

is basically a one-stop shop. "We can treat the whole family in one place," shares Dr. Shamsee. "I get to know the parents, the children, and in many cases the grandparents and grandchildren." Family Medicine physicians are particularly well-suited for people who want the same doctor for their whole lives.

INTERNAL MEDICINE

focuses on adult medicine and the aging process. Internists generally don't see patients younger than 18 years old. An internist also often deals with patients who have multiple ongoing health conditions.

PEDIATRICIANS treat newborns to late adolescents. "Children are not little adults," explains Dr. Waraksa. "The things we use to treat kids are not the same as what we use to treat adults." While any child can see a pediatrician, they are often necessary for children who have special or difficult health conditions.

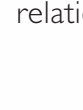
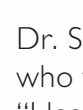
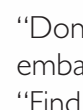
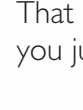
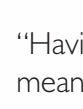
OB/GYNs have special training in pregnancy and childbirth, as well as other women's gynecological health issues. An OB/GYN is sometimes used as a Primary Care Provider, particularly during a woman's childbearing years.

GET RECOMMENDATIONS.

Talk to your family and friends to find out who they would recommend. If they love their doctor, find out why. Do their reasons match the priorities you've established?

MAKE AN INTRODUCTORY APPOINTMENT.

Many physicians will offer an initial 'get to know you' appointment to meet the doctor, learn about the team he or she may work with (nurses and advanced practitioners) and ask questions you might have about the way they practice. It's a good way to see if personalities mesh and priorities are met.



Strong Relationship is Key

Both doctors agree the key to choosing the right Primary Care Provider is a good relationship.

"Having a strong doctor-patient relationship means trust," explains Dr. Shamsee.

"In the end, it's a personality thing," confirms Dr. Waraksa. "Find somebody who matches your personality... someone you really feel comfortable with."

That means you may have to change doctors if you just don't "click."

"Don't stay because you feel guilty or embarrassed to switch," Dr. Waraksa reassures. "Find someone you trust."

Dr. Shamsee agrees. "There's no easy answer who to pick or who not to pick," he shares. "I learned a long time ago it's all about the relationship. That's the most important thing."



How to Choose

Dr. Shamsee and Dr. Waraksa suggest the following tips to get you started:

ESTABLISH YOUR PRIORITIES.

Decide what's most important to you. Do you want details or do you prefer a simple recommendation? Do you care if your doctor is a man or a woman? More experienced or on the cutting edge of new treatments and technologies? Always on time or always willing to take as much time as necessary?

If you'd like help in finding a Primary Care Provider call us at:

800-718-DEAN (3326)

Learn more about our providers by searching our provider directory on deancare.com