

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 physicians, 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.

"It's so important to have someone who really *knows you*... someone who can help you steer the ship," explains **Kevin Vogt, MD, Family Medicine (with Obstetrics), at Dean's Madison West Clinic.**

Mariya Pogorelova, MD, an Internal Medicine at Dean's Madison East Clinic agrees. "Prevention is so very, very important," she says. "You can get feedback on your overall health during routine visits with your Primary Care Provider."

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.

"When you don't have a Primary Care Provider, you don't have someone who is checking up on you regularly. You definitely could start to miss warning signs."

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," confirms Dr. Vogt. "I'm emotionally involved with a family from very early on. We go through all their trials together." 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. "Internal medicine is about putting the whole picture together," shares Dr. Pogorelova.

PEDIATRICIANS

treat newborns to late adolescents. 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.

"In this area, the healthcare services are excellent; there are a lot of options," says Dr. Vogt. "So it really comes down to finding someone whose personality is compatible with yours and someone who is going to work hard for you."

That means you may end up changing doctors if you just don't "click."

"Don't feel guilty about changing or questioning," Dr. Vogt reassures. "Find someone you trust."

"It's so important to have a good relationship," says Dr. Pogorelova. "If you establish a good relationship with your doctor when you're healthy, then you feel more comfortable when you need to come because you're sick. I know my patients' medical problems, and I know them."

How to Choose

Dr. Vogt and Dr. Pogorelova 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)

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