



You and Your Primary Care Physician: A Relationship for a Healthy Life

When you have a health concern or need medical care, do you have that one “go to” doctor you can call? A primary care physician, or PCP, is your main point of contact—your first stop—to identify an illness or condition, offer methods of care, write prescriptions, and recommend specialists or facilities if additional diagnoses and follow up are needed.

When you establish a relationship with a PCP, you develop continuity of care with someone who gets to know you and your health goals, and helps you manage your overall progress, which adds up to better health.

Benefits of a PCP:

- Your PCP will provide routine and preventive care services such as annual physicals, exams, and treatment for colds and flu.
- Your PCP can help you focus on staying healthy in addition to treating you when you are sick or hurt.
- Through routine care, your PCP can catch problems early before they become serious or lead to major illnesses.
- If you have a chronic condition like asthma or diabetes, your PCP will help you develop a self-management plan, monitor your progress, and refer you to specialized care if needed.

Get the most of your time with your PCP:

- **Be honest.** It's always the best policy, especially when your health could be affected.
- **Come prepared.** Write down your questions and be specific about what you intend to discuss.
- **Prioritize your concerns.** Time is limited with a provider so focus on the issues most important to you.
- **Don't be afraid to request another appointment.** If you have a long list of items, schedule another appointment, and tell the doctor you have other issues to address.
- **Bring someone with you.** A close friend or family member can help keep track of information and is a way to be sure all your questions will be answered.
- **Use an online patient portal to communicate if available.** Don't underestimate the power of communication that is not face to face.
- **Tell your doctor about OTC medications, herbal supplements, and vitamins.** Some of these can interact with prescribed drugs.
- **Tell the doctor if you are stressed, depressed, or abused.** Doctors may not be therapists but they've heard it all. Don't be afraid to discuss personal issues.
- **Let your doctor know if you have reasons for not following orders.** Does your medication cause side effects? Are you unable to follow a nutrition or activity plan? Let your doctor know!
- **Tell your doctor if you can't sleep.** Sleep is important to your health. Your doctor can evaluate the problem and provide advice on how to solve it.
- **Let your doctor know if you have low energy.** Fatigue is associated with many illnesses. Let your doctor know if this is a chronic problem.



If you are new to the Optima Health community, you can often continue your relationship with your current physician, or select a new one from our extensive list of participating providers. If you have children, you may choose a participating pediatrician as their PCP. You can change your PCP or review a list of participating providers at optimahealth.com.