



Steps for **Choosing a Primary Care Provider (PCP) and Making an Appointment**



Who is a PCP?

A PCP is a healthcare provider who sees you for common health problems and regular yearly check-ups. Your PCP may be a doctor, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant.

Your PCP will give you regular check-ups. They will make sure you are staying healthy by running tests, such as a blood pressure screening. Your PCP also makes a care plan to prevent health problems. They will treat you if you get sick.

Choosing a PCP is the **first step in taking care of your health**. Here's what to do next:



1. Find healthcare providers in your insurance plan's network.



2. Pick a PCP that you want to learn more about.



3. Call the PCP office for information.



4. Make an appointment.



5. Prepare for the appointment.

There are things to consider and questions you can ask before choosing a PCP. The details in steps 1 through 5 can help.

Step 1. Find a PCP in Your Network

Find a PCP by calling your insurance company, asking friends or family, or visiting a website that locates providers. Many insurance company websites will have a search box to find someone in your network.

Step 2. Pick a PCP to Learn More About

Decide what you want in a PCP.

- Do you want a PCP who speaks a certain language?
- Someone who is in a certain neighborhood?
- Someone who works on days or at times that are good for you?
- Is the age, sex, race, or religion of the PCP important to you?
- Do you want to know where your PCP got their medical degree?
- Do you want to know how many years of experience a PCP has?

Step 3. Call the PCP's Office

Here are some questions to ask when you call:

- Do you take my insurance?
- Are you taking new patients?
- What are your office hours?
- Is the PCP board-certified? In what field?
- What floor is the office on? Is there an elevator in the building?
- How far ahead do I have to make appointments?

Next, ask yourself: Was the staff helpful and respectful?



Step 4. Make Your Appointment

Be sure to give all the information the office needs to book your appointment, such as:

- Your name, date of birth, and insurance information.
- The reason for your visit (for example, you are a new patient).

Confirm the date and time of the appointment and write it down. Don't forget to also write down the name of the PCP, their phone number, and their address.

Step 5. Get Ready for Your Appointment

- Before the visit, prepare your identification documents, such as driver's license, passport, visa, green card, school ID, or birth certificate. Get your insurance cards. Get your medical records from other healthcare providers. Get a list of medications you are taking.
- Find out if you will have a copayment, and how much it is. A copayment is what you pay out of your own pocket for every medical visit. Call your insurance company to get this information.
- Make a list of questions you want to ask the PCP. Write your questions in a notebook so that you remember everything you want to ask the PCP.

Depending on how you're feeling, you might want to ask the PCP certain questions about your health. Here are some examples to help you think of questions to ask:

- How can I lose weight and exercise more?
- What is my cholesterol? My glucose? My blood pressure? My weight and body mass index (BMI)? My waist circumference?
- What cancer screenings (tests) should I be having, if any?
- Do I have health risks because a blood relative of mine had a certain disease?
- Why am I feeling so stressed, anxious, or depressed?
- Why do I have pain, a cough, or shortness of breath?



During your visit with the PCP, tell them anything that is bothering you. Also share information such as:

- Your family medical history. Has someone related to you by blood had cancer or other diseases?
- Medications that you need to refill.
- Questions or concerns about your health. Bring a notebook so you can see your questions, and then write down the PCP's answers.
- Ask a family member or friend to come with you to your appointment for help with remembering what the PCP says. This person can also make sure you ask your questions. They can help take notes during your time with the PCP.

After the physical exam of your visit, make sure:

- You understand everything the PCP said.
- The PCP addressed your concerns.
- You ask the PCP questions about the physical exam, such as
 - How is my health?
 - Did you find anything during the exam?
 - Do I need any blood work, tests, or treatment?

It is your legal right to have an interpreter (a person who translates) if you need one. Ask for an interpreter if you do not speak English well and your doctor does not speak your language.

**For questions about your NYSOH insurance plan
or your health:**

Please call your IHCD Navigator,

(Navigator name)

at

(phone number)



Memorial Sloan Kettering
Cancer Center

Immigrant Health and Cancer Disparities Service

Towards Equity in Health