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# HOW TO CHOOSE A PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN

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## Choosing a Primary Care Physician

In the past people relied on family doctors for everything from broken bones and the common cold to the delivery of babies. Family practitioners knew the medical history of the entire family because they treated both the children and the parents. Primary Care Physicians (PCP) have brought this tradition back. Instead of specializing in a specific area of medicine, PCPs help patients maintain overall health by focusing on preventive care. This person is usually a doctor, but may be a physician assistant or a nurse practitioner.



## Why should you choose a PCP?

Establishing a sound relationship with a PCP is one of the most important steps that you can take to ensure good long-term health and quality health care. As a key player on your health care team, the PCP is the coordinator of your health care. This is the individual in the medical system that you will communicate most with and interact on a one-to-one basis with most frequently. The care provider will be responsible for seeing to it that your health care team works together to provide the best possible care for you.

Establishing a trusting relationship with your primary care provider is essential. This allows the provider to understand your overall health history and recommend prevention strategies to reduce your risk for future health problems. A well-developed provider-patient relationship will also yield better communication between the two. Ultimately, better communication with the primary care provider results in better care for the individual!

Don't wait until you get sick to choose a PCP. Primary Care Physicians may see their patients regularly and look for symptoms a patient may not notice. For example, a routine health exam may uncover conditions such as high blood pressure or even hormonal imbalances due to glandular problems. Health problems like these can go unnoticed by the patient for years and could result in serious chronic health issues. Annual exams may help your PCP guide you toward healthy lifestyle habits that may decrease the likelihood that you'll need expensive specialty care. Developing a relationship with your Primary Care Physician can help keep illnesses at bay. Remember the old adage: An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

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You also save money when you visit your PCP for routine preventive care. Services including a routine biometric screening, annual physical, well woman exam, prostate exam, mammography and colonoscopy are covered by your medical plan. These preventive exams are part of the [Healthy Lifestyle Premium Discount program](#) so you can also save money off your medical premium for FY2017/18. These [additional preventive services](#) are also covered at 100 percent.

## How to choose a PCP

If you do not currently have a PCP, follow the steps listed below and secure your primary care provider this week.

- Contact your health insurance provider and obtain a list of in-network primary care providers.
- Visit with friends, family, and others. Find out who, on your in-network list, they would recommend.
- Contact the primary care provider office and inquire whether or not new patients are being accepted. If so, find out the process to become a patient.
- Schedule an appointment to meet the care provider to determine if the provider is a good fit for you. Assess whether or not the provider makes you feel at ease, listens to you, and answers questions thoroughly.
- Notify your health insurance provider so that the provider is listed on your records.

With the Pima County medical plan, you may visit any doctor, anytime you need care. No referrals are needed. Use the Aetna online directory to find doctors by specialty and location. You'll also find maps, directions and more. You can even look for doctors who speak your language. Visit [www.aetna.com](http://www.aetna.com) to get started.