

Choosing a Doctor

WHAT KIND OF PROVIDER DO YOU NEED?

Type	Considerations
Primary Care	Remember that this will be a long-term relationship. Does the doctor accept your insurance? Does he refer to specialists in your network? What is his hospital affiliation? Is he accepting new patients?
Specialist	Does she accept your insurance? Is she board certified in the specialty you need? Will she be accessible to you? What is her hospital affiliation? Does she have experience in the field and with your specific condition?
Second Opinion	How much experience does he have with your condition? Is he board certified in the specialty you need? You may want a doctor who is not associated with your original doctor.
Nurse Practitioner	A nurse practitioner may have more time for patients, may be more accessible, and may be easier to contact.

CHECK CREDENTIALS AND MEDICAL BOARD STATUS:

Check your physician's credentials on your state medical board web site (find it at www.patientsrighttoknow.org), at the American Board of Medical Specialties (www.abms.org), or at the American College of Surgeons (FACS) at www.facs.org.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- Are the appointment days and times convenient?
- What is the appointment cancellation policy?
- Who is part of the doctor's "on call" group?
- How will after-hours emergencies be handled?
- Is the doctor supportive of alternative therapies?
- Does the doctor have an established network of trusted referrals for nutritionists, physical therapists, acupuncturists, etc?

OTHER IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS:

- Is the office location convenient for the patient?
- Can you work with the office staff? Is there enough staff?
- How can you reach the doctor? Are phone calls returned in a timely manner?
- Will the office contact you directly with test results?
- Will age, language or cultural issues be a barrier?