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The Importance of Establishing a Relationship with Your Doctor

A primary care provider (PCP), also known as a primary doctor, is your main health care provider in nonemergency situations. Your PCP typically provides you with medical care over a long period of time, helping you stay healthy, manage your care and recommend specialists when needed.

Having a well-established, trusting relationship with your doctor is crucial to your long-term health, and can also save you money in the long run. Moreover, research shows that patients who have a good relationship with their doctor receive better care and are happier with the care they receive.

Getting Started

The first step in creating an established relationship with your doctor is finding a doctor, which can require a great deal of care and consideration. Your choices

may be limited, depending on your health plan.

Be sure the doctor you choose is covered by your plan and is taking new patients. Ask other relevant questions to determine if the doctor will fit your needs, such as average wait times for appointments or if the doctor has experience or specializes in a particular disease. If necessary, ask to speak directly to the doctor over the phone or in person. Having a good relationship with your doctor often leads to you asking the right amount and type of questions.

Make sure to take notes on your doctor's answers so that you won't forget what he or she says. If you have questions after you leave, don't hesitate to call the doctor's office. In most cases, a nurse or physician's assistant can answer your questions or will have your doctor return your call.

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Provide Relevant Information

Once you've found the right doctor, it's important that you begin to build your relationship during the first visit. Tell your doctor about your health history, your family's health history, symptoms, medications and any allergies you have. If you do not share relevant information, your doctor may never ask or may assume there is nothing important he or she needs to know. Likewise, if you do not ask questions, your doctor will likely assume that you understand everything.

Summary

Making sure that your doctor is someone that you trust is very important. Take your time choosing a PCP and be sure to visit at least once per year so that you can continue to build and maintain your relationship.

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