

Transition to Adulthood: Finding the Right Doctor for You

Finding the right doctor for you is important. When you are looking for a doctor, it may help to do a little work ahead of time. Think about what you need and what is important to you.

What things should I consider?

- **What type of doctor do I need?**
 - Do I need a primary care doctor (family practice, internal medicine, Med-Peds) and/or a specialist for ongoing care of a chronic health problem?
- **What type of practice do I want my doctor to be in?**
 - Do I want:
 - A doctor who works alone or more than one doctor in a practice?
 - A practice that uses advanced practice nurses?
 - A clinic in a hospital or one in my community?
 - If the doctor works alone, who will I see when the doctor is not available?
 - Do I need to see a specialist for my condition? Do I want a multi-specialty practice or a group focused on only one specialty?
- **What type of relationship would I like to have with my doctor?**
 - Someone who makes the decisions for me and determines the plan of care?
 - Someone who lets me make all of the decisions?
 - Someone who makes decisions with me?
- **What approach to treatment do I want the doctor to have?**
 - A doctor who treats aggressively?
 - One who is cautious and conservative?
 - Someone in between those two types of practices?
- **Will they accept my insurance?**
 - You may need to get a list of doctors that are covered by your insurance.

What questions might I ask?

Below are some questions to ask when you call the doctor's office. You do not need to ask these exact questions. Pick the questions that are important for you, or come up with your own.

- What services does your practice offer? Which do you provide and which are done by others such as a nurse, advanced practice nurse or physician's assistant?
- Where do I have lab work or tests done?
- What happens if I need to be in the hospital?
- What hospitals are you affiliated with?
- Do you bill my insurance company directly?

- Do you have a payment plan for any costs not covered by my insurance?
- Are you open to talking about other treatments such as the use of herbal or alternative treatments?
- Can I make an appointment just to ask questions and talk about a plan of care?
- How many patients do you see each day? How long does an appointment take?
- Who answers phone calls from me? How soon are the phone calls returned? Do you give advice or prescribe medicines over the phone?
- Can I talk with you through e-mail?
- Who will see me when you are on vacation or if it is after hours? What should I do or where should I go if it is after hours?
- If I ever need a second opinion, would you help me with a referral?

If you have special health care needs:

- Do you see patients with special health care needs in your practice?
- Do you and your staff have experience with a person who has _____ (your special health care need)?
- Is your practice a medical home practice? A medical home practice gives care that is easy to access, continuous, all-inclusive, family-centered, coordinated, compassionate, and respects a person's culture.
- Are you available to work in a team with my other providers (other doctors, social worker, case worker, home care nurse, personal care assistant, therapists, etc.)?

Making the final decision

1. Narrow your list down to a few names.

Your insurance company may decide this. Friends, other health care providers and others that you know with a health care condition like yours may be good people to ask. Remember what works for one person, may not work for you.

2. Check out the credentials of the candidates.

Where did the doctor go to medical school? Where was training done after medical school? Did the doctor do a fellowship after training? How long ago was training completed? Is the doctor board certified?

Several web sites can help with this step in the process:

- American Medical Association Physician Select: www.ama-assn.org (click Dr. Finder)
- American Board of Medical Specialties: www.certifieddoctor.org
- Medical College of Wisconsin Physician Find: www.doctor.mcw.edu/

3. Interview the doctor(s).

See questions to ask, listed above.

4. Make a decision and schedule your first appointment.

ALERT: Call your doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if you have special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to provide you with additional information about your child's care. Diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up should be provided by your health care professional.