

Transition to Adulthood: Finding the Right Doctor

Finding the right doctor 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?

Doctor

- Do I need a primary care doctor, such as a family practice, internal medicine or Med-Peds doctor?
- Do I need a specialist for ongoing care of a chronic health problem?

Practice

- Do I want:
 - A doctor who works alone or more than one doctor in a practice?
 - A practice that uses advanced practice nurses, or physician assistants?
 - 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?

Patient doctor relationship

- Do I want someone who:
 - Makes the decisions for me and decides the plan of care?
 - Lets me make all of the decisions?
 - Makes decisions with me?

Approach to treatment

- **Do I want:**
 - A doctor who treats aggressively?
 - One who is cautious and conservative?
 - Someone in between those two types?

Insurance

- 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?

Here are some questions you may want to ask when you call the doctor's office. Pick the questions that are important for you, or come up with your own.

- What services does your practice offer? Which are done by you and which are done by others such as a nurse, advanced practice nurse or physician's assistant?
- Where are tests or lab work done?
- What happens if I need to be in the hospital?

- What hospitals do you work in?
- Do you bill my insurance company?
- 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 and continuous,
 - all-inclusive and coordinated,
 - family-centered and compassionate, and
 - respects a person’s culture.
- Are you able to work as a team with my other providers? This may include 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. It may help to ask friends, other health care providers and others that you know with a health care condition like yours. 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? How long ago was the training done? Is the doctor board certified?

These 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.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.