



6 Steps to Selecting the Right Doctor

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Before selecting a doctor for yourself or a loved one, do your homework.

Your health and the health of your loved ones is paramount. It's important to select a doctor you can trust, respect, and work with.

It's important to confirm that the doctor that will be selected, is in your network and covered under your current medical benefits. If you select a doctor out of network, you can end up spending a lot of money out of pocket.

To follow are 6 Steps to Selecting the Right Doctor For You.

STEP 1 - KEY THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

When researching a doctor - it's a good idea to ask the doctor if they would be open to a brief interview meeting, to better understand the doctor's style and approach, and determine if this would be a good fit for both of you.

You'd be surprised at how many doctors agree to the meeting.

It's important not to continue to see a doctor that you don't feel comfortable with, or who is not meeting your needs. If you are seeing a doctor who you do not feel comfortable with, contact your insurance company, explain the situation and ask to switch doctors.

I'm continually surprised when I talk with people.

A person will tell me they stopped seeing their hairdresser or barber because they weren't satisfied with the services they were receiving. When it comes to the same person not being happy with their doctor, the response is "Oh I could never ask to change doctors. "Why not?"

STEP 2 – UNDERSTAND THE DOCTOR’S APPROACH TO PATIENT CARE

Is the doctor open to:

1. Explain things to you, and help you make important decisions regarding immunizations, screenings and treatment options.
2. Have diverse experience and be open to providing you with the all facts and treatment options, as well as the pros and cons of each option.
3. Be open to referring you to a specialist when more expertise is needed, or a second opinion is warranted.

STEP 3 – WHERE TO LOOK

Your choices when selecting a doctor may be limited by your health plan.

You can call your insurance company or go to the company’s website to research covered providers.

You may want to check with the local hospital physician referral line, ask your other health providers for suggestions, or inquire with friends.

STEP 4 – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Here are some questions to ask when choosing a doctor:

- What style are you comfortable with - businesslike and to the point, or warm and nurturing?
- Do you like a doctor who makes decisions for you based on his or her best judgment, or do you prefer one who presents the options and invites you to help decide?
- Does the doctor:
 - Treat you with respect?
 - Listen to you when you express your opinion and concerns?
 - Encourage you to ask questions?
 - Explain things to you in a clear and understandable way?
- Does the doctor return phone calls?
- Do you feel safe and comfortable telling your doctor all your concerns?
- Do you feel rushed and cut short when you’re with the doctor?
- Are you comfortable with the amount of time you spend in the waiting room?

STEP 5 – QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT THE DOCTOR

Is the doctor:

- board certified?
- affiliated with any hospitals?
- in private practice or is the practice owned by a hospital or healthcare group?
- experienced in treating other patients with your illness or condition?
- aware and up to date on new developments in the field related to your illness or condition?
- willing to take the time to answer your questions?
- willing to suggest a second opinion?
- honest with you about your condition and prognosis?
- a good communicator?

Does the doctor...

- look at things from a 360 degree perspective and present options and solutions?
- treat you as an individual, not just a clinical case?
- give you their full attention and adequate office time?

STEP 6 – MAKING THE CHOICE

Make your final choice based on your answers to the above questions.

Remember, no matter how accomplished a doctor is, if you don't feel you can trust the doctor to understand your individual needs, and give you the best care for your situation, it may be wise to explore other options.

RESOURCES

For More Information About How to Find a Doctor Who Listens to You

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

1-800-232-4636

1-888-232-6348 (TTY/toll-free)

cdcinfo@cdc.gov

<https://www.cdc.gov/cdc-info/index.html>

- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

1-800-633-4227 (toll-free)

1-877-486-2048 (TTY/toll-free)

<https://www.medicare.gov/>

- MedlinePlus

National Library of Medicine

www.medlineplus.gov

Photo from Printshop

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Please consult your health care provider for an appointment, before making any healthcare decisions or for guidance about a specific medical condition.

Linda Ziac is the owner and founder of The Caregiver Resource Center. The Caregiver Resource Center is a division of Employee Assistance Professionals, Inc. which Linda founded in October 1990. The Caregiver Resource Center provides a spectrum of concierge case management and advocacy services for seniors, people with special needs and families.

Linda's professional career spans more than 40 years in the health and mental health field as a CT Licensed Professional Counselor, CT Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor, Board Certified Employee Assistance Professional, Board Certified Case Manager, and Board Certified Dementia Practitioner. In addition, Ms. Ziac has 15 years of experience coordinating care for her own parents.

Linda assists seniors, people with special needs and their families; in planning for and implementing ways to allow for the greatest degree of health, safety, independence, and quality of life. Linda meets with individuals and family members to assess their needs, and develop a Care Team, while working with members of the Team to formulate a comprehensive Care Plan (a road map).

Once a plan is in place, Linda is available to serve as the point person to monitor and coordinate services, and revise the plan as needed. This role is similar to the conductor of an orchestra; ensuring that there is good communication, teamwork, and that everyone remains focused on the desired goal.

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