

Transition to Adulthood: Finding the Right Doctor

Finding the right doctor is important. It is usually most helpful to find your primary care, adult doctor first, before any needed specialists. A primary care doctor could be a family Practice, Internal Medicine or Med-Peds doctor. Think about what you need and what is important to you.

What things should I consider?

Insurance

- Ask if they will accept your insurance. You may need to get a list of doctors that are covered by your insurance.
- Ask if the doctor's office will bill your insurance.

Services

Find out:

- What services the practice offers.
- What the doctor does and what is done by other health professionals. This could be a nurse, advanced practice nurse or physician's assistant.
- Who covers for the doctor when they are on vacation or after hours.
- If you can get help with referrals if a second opinion is needed.
- Who answers the phone calls. How soon calls are returned.
- If advice or prescriptions are given over the phone.
- If the office offers payment plans.

Other Services

Find out:

- Where tests or lab work are done.
- Which hospitals the doctor works with.

If you have special health care needs

Find out:

- If the doctor is open to talking about other treatments like herbal or alternative treatments.
- If you can make an appointment just to ask questions or talk about a plan of care.
- How many patients the doctor sees each day. How long an appointment takes.
- If the doctor will talk with you by email or through a personal electronic health site, like MyChart.

If you have special health care needs

Find out if the doctor and their staff:

- See patients with special health care needs in your practice.
- Have cared for a person who has your special health care need.
- Will work as a team with your other providers. This may include other doctors, social worker, case worker, home care nurse, personal care assistant, therapists, or others.
- Is a medical home practice. A medical home practice gives care that is:
 - easy to access and continuous,
 - all-inclusive and coordinated,
 - family-centered and compassionateand respects a person's culture.

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.

Find out:

- Where the doctor went to medical school.
- Where the training was done after medical school.
- How long ago the training was done.
- If the doctor is board certified.
- These web sites can help with this step in the process:
 - American Board of Medical Specialties. www.certifieddoctor.org
 - Medical College of Wisconsin Physician Find. www.doctor.mcw.edu/

3. Interview the doctors.

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.