
TIPS FOR FINDING AND USING ADULT HEALTH CARE

As young people grow from childhood into adulthood, many will move from being cared for by pediatricians to being cared for by adult providers. Moving to a different town due to school or a change of employment will also create a need to find a new doctor, especially if you have chronic health conditions. Follow these tips to find a provider that will meet your medical needs, is covered by your health insurance, and will give you the care you are looking for.

Before you start looking for a new provider, think about what you want:

- **Provider's Office**
 - Is the office location important?
 - Will you need help with transportation to appointments?
 - Do you need an office that is wheelchair accessible or other special assistance at the office?
 - Are the office hours convenient?
 - How will you contact the office when they aren't open?
 - What hospital do you want to use, and is this doctor on the staff there?
- **The Provider**
 - Do you want someone who will take time with you during an office visit or are you comfortable with someone who is "good" in their field but lacks bedside manner?
 - Is it important that your new provider is knowledgeable about your special health care needs or do you think you can provide that information or connect the new doctor with those who can provide medical insight?

Since your wellness depends on the medical services you receive, it is important that you are comfortable talking with your new provider and feel that they understand your concerns. Consider scheduling a "get-acquainted" interview before you make a final choice of a new provider. You will have to pay for this visit, as it is NOT covered by insurance benefits. This interview should last 15-30 minutes, and the best time to see a provider is when your health condition is stable, so you are not asking for crisis care.

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Think about (and write down) questions that are important to you:

- Is the provider knowledgeable about your health issues and/or willing to learn from you and from previous providers?
- Do you like the communication style with the provider and the office?
- Are you satisfied with office practices and access during an emergency or in urgent situations?
- Do you have access to hospitals and specialists if you need them?

Providers who care for children are different from providers who care for adults. As a young adult, you will need the following skills as you transition from pediatricians to adult health care providers:

- Ability and willingness to tell the provider about your history, current symptoms, lifestyle, and self-care in a few minutes. Remember to bring you medical history summary to your appointment.
- Ability to ask questions about your condition and how it will affect your school, work, recreation, and social life.
- Ability to tell the provider about your needs for education, technology, and accommodations.
- More independence in following up with referrals and keeping all agencies informed.
- More involvement in keeping yourself healthy with diet and weight control, exercise and recreation, following medication, treatment and hygiene regimens, limiting risky behaviors (drinking, smoking, unsafe sexual practices), and getting help for your mental health.
- Being more aware of your physical and mental symptoms and health needs before you experience a crisis.
- Developing a plan for when you have an emergency.
- Understanding health care benefits and health insurance.
- Recognizing that as you become more capable in directing your care, that you – not your parents – should be in charge of your health.

Adapted from the KY Commission for Children with Special Health Care Needs (2001)