

HAVING A PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER

A Trusted Partner in Your Health

Why Primary Care is Essential to Your Health

A primary care provider (PCP) will help you stay healthy; prevent disease by identifying risk factors; coordinate and manage chronic disease for longevity and overall a better quality of life.

You will be able to talk about anything that is bothering you physically and emotionally and they will get to know you as a person. They can develop a baseline of your well-being, allowing for optimal management of your total health.

Prevention & Early Detection of Chronic Conditions

Your primary care provider is not just interested in you when you are sick. They will work with you on helping with wellness and prevention that may include things like weight management, smoking cessation or managing stress and anxiety. They can arrange for screenings such as mammograms, colonoscopies, glucose, cholesterals and more.

Research shows that people who have a primary care provider live longer. The reason is that the relationship that forms over time leads to better understanding your health and finding health problems early when they are easier to treat.

Maintaining your annual wellness visits will help you stay healthy and prevent disease by identifying risk factors and managing chronic disease for longevity and improved quality of life.



6 in 10 adults in the US have a chronic disease



4 in 10 adults in the US have 2 or more chronic diseases

Who is a Primary Care Provider?

Health care providers trained in primary care develop a long term partnership with their patients and look at the complete picture of your health.

A PCP can be a physician but can also be another health provider who works under the direction of a physician specializing in family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics/gynecology and geriatrics as noted below.

Services	Practices	Providers
Comprehensive Care	Internist (adults)	Physician
Patient-Centered Care	Pediatricians (children)	Nurse Practitioner
Coordinated Care	Family medicine (whole family)	Advance Practice Nurse
Accessible Services	OB-GYN (women)	Physician Assistant

What Services are Provided by a PCP?

A PCP is a health manager and unlike most other providers, you don't see your PCP only when you are sick.



Preventive Care

Screenings
Wellness visits
Immunizations



Treatment

Address illnesses and conditions
Identify risk factors for serious conditions



Early Detection

Identify conditions early such as cancer and heart disease



Management

Help with chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and obesity



Referrals

To medical specialist if needed

Research shows that access to primary care has a positive impact on health outcomes.

A Trusted Health Advocate & Advisor

PCP, also sometimes referred to as having a medical home, delivers patient-centered care. This approach takes everything into account and encourages people to take charge of their health and well-being. Your PCP will be your partner in helping you set goals for your physical and mental health. This is beneficial in:

- effective chronic disease management;
- increased patient and provider satisfaction;
- cost savings;
- improved quality of care; and
- increased preventive care.

A primary care provider can help you lead a healthier lifestyle, provide needed medications, screen for disease and recommend specialists when you need them.

Access to Care Challenges

Disparities in access to primary care exist, and many people face barriers that decrease access to services and increase the risk of poor health outcomes. Some of these obstacles include lack of health insurance, language-related barriers, disabilities, inability to take time off work to attend appointments, geographic and transportation-related barriers, and a shortage of primary care providers. These barriers may intersect to further reduce access to primary care. If you are experiencing challenges, call your local health care system to ask if you are eligible for financial assistance and/or navigation services.



New Jersey has about 5,300 providers in primary care. (2024)

Choosing a Primary Care Provider

Find a PCP who can provide complete care over your lifetime that you are comfortable with and have regular wellness checkups.

Think about the following to decide who is a good fit for your personality, lifestyle and needs:

- What are their qualifications?
- Are they certified in primary care?
- Do they focus on disease prevention or treatment?
- How do they decide when a patient needs a specialist?
- How do they like to communicate (in person, on the phone, by email)?
- Whom would I talk to when they are on vacation?
- Do they take my insurance?

Consider the office setting and staff as well:

- What are the office hours?
- How long does it take to get an appointment?
- Does the office do lab tests onsite or nearby?
- Are the staff members friendly?
- Do staff members respond to calls quickly?
- Is the office convenient to get to?



People who have a PCP spend less time in the hospital and less money on medical costs in the long run.

To Access a Full Range of Free Resources VISIT:

 <https://www.hunterdonhealth.org/services/hunterdon-mercero-chronic-disease-coalition>

