

## How a Primary Care Physician Helps With Your Care

A general physician, or primary care physician (PCP), is important because he or she sees you for a variety of illnesses, usually over a period of many years. PCPs have a broad knowledge of a range of general medicine, but often have extra training in a specialty, normally Family Practice, Internal Medicine or Pediatrics.

- General practitioner-do not focus on one area of medicine but take care of a broad range of medical problems. They have completed an internship but not a residency.
- Family practice-similar to general practitioners, but have completed a family practice residency and have extra training on health care for all family members, regardless of age
- Internal medicine-A doctor for adults for a variety of medical problems. Have completed a residency in internal medicine.
- Pediatrics-have completed a pediatric residency, and have special training in the care of newborns, infants, children and adolescents

A primary care physician coordinates your care, takes care of many of your healthcare needs, sees you for common problems, and helps you improve your health through prevention. If you have a medical problem that requires special treatment that is outside the expertise of your personal care physician, you will often be referred to a specialist for that condition, although you do not need a referral and can choose any doctor you wish. At some point, there may be a number of physicians involved in your care, many who are specialists in a particular field. Having a primary care physician who knows your healthcare history, and who can coordinate your care with a number of different physicians, can be very important in getting the care you need.

Source: National Institutes of Health