

make it yours



3 hints you've probably never heard for finding a new doctor.

If finding a new doctor is in your future, you know that making sure he or she is in-network, in a convenient location, and actually accepting new patients are all key things to consider. But to really get what you want, you need to shop for a doctor the same way you would for any other professional service. Here are three ways to take your doc-shopping skills up a notch.

Snoop around online.

You wouldn't hire a plumber or a nanny without looking them up online first, would you? It makes sense to do the same level of homework (if not more!) for your doctor, a health care professional you're trusting with your health and, in some cases, your life. Here are some good online sources to help you.

Your insurance carrier's website has the basic information you need to make a list of in-network doctors in your area. Also check out the websites of the practice or clinic where a doctor works to get more information about their experience, billing/payment details, etc. And did you know that your state's medical board has a website with information about every doctor who's licensed to practice in your state? (Just type "[YOUR STATE] state medical board" into a search engine, and it should be pretty easy to find.) You'll see everything from a doctor's years in practice, specialties, and hospital admitting privileges to complaints, investigations, and disciplinary actions. Just make sure you don't jump to conclusions too quickly about what you find. For example, working in a teaching hospital doesn't automatically mean someone's too busy to see patients; nor does it automatically mean she's a good doctor (maybe she's just a good teacher). Which college or medical school someone attended isn't an automatic reflection of the quality of care you'll receive—that depends on the individual, not the alma mater. And it's really not all that unusual for a good doctor with a long career to have a complaint or investigation on the record.

Ask for an (unofficial) recommendation.

You already have someone in the health care business you trust—your current doctor! They'll know many area doctors professionally, and some personally. So on your next visit, explain your situation and see what your current doctor knows about the doctors on your list, and which ones might be a good fit for you. Don't feel awkward about asking—your doctor will probably regret losing you as a patient, but most doctors are happy to help. If you don't have a medical reason to see your current doctor, call and ask the office staff or nurse to pass along your request.

Trust your instincts.

You'll know over time if you're getting good results; but you'll probably know after one visit if you feel comfortable with your new doctor. And first impressions count. Was the office chaotic, or calm and efficient? Was the staff friendly? How long was your wait? Was the doctor professional, easy to talk to, and focused on you? Did it feel like he or she was trying to get to know you, asking questions and listening to your answers? Did your questions get answered clearly and fully? Did you feel respected, comfortable, and at ease? Or did you feel rushed? Like shopping for anything, your opinion matters.

Your health is important—and medical care can seem so mysterious at times—but with the right approach, there's really no reason to be intimidated or anxious about finding the right new doctor for you.

Benefits and services available may vary from plan to plan—please refer to your plan's Summary Plan Description for exact coverage details. This article is not intended to provide medical advice. Aon Hewitt does not recommend or endorse a particular course of medical treatment. If you have any questions concerning your medical condition or any drugs, treatment plans, or new symptoms, consult your health care provider.

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