



What is a primary care provider and why you need one?

A primary care provider (or PCP) is a trained medical professional that can help you manage your health and well-being over time. They are your go-to source for routine and preventive health care services.

As a person diagnosed with cancer, establishing a good relationship with a PCP is a positive step you can take to protect your health now and in the future.

Having a PCP that is interested and knowledgeable with who you are, the type of cancer you were diagnosed with and how it was treated is optimal.

PCPs can work with you and your cancer care team to manage potential short and long-term effects from cancer and its treatment. A PCP can provide follow-up care specific to your cancer type and treatment.

Having the right PCP for you as an AYA is very important. If you have one now, you may wish to continue with them. If you need a PCP or a different one, look for one that you can connect with. It is not uncommon to have visits with different PCPs until you find the one that works with you, one who understands you, and makes you feel heard.

What is primary care?

- Physicals, screenings and vaccinations
- Non-emergency medical care (e.g. sinus infection, flu, or minor injury)
- Management of chronic health conditions (e.g., diabetes, high blood pressure)
- Help manage your health as an AYA cancer survivor.

Who provides primary care?

- **Medical Doctors (MDs) and Doctors of Osteopathic Medicine (DOs)** specializing in:
 - Internal medicine (care for adults only)
 - Family practice (care for children, adolescents & adults)
 - Pediatrics (care for children and adolescents only)
- **Obstetrician/Gynecologist (OB/GYN)** doctor who specializes in women's health, wellness, and prenatal care. Many women use an OB/GYN as their primary gynecologic care provider and PCP during pregnancies. In addition to an OB/GYN, female cancer survivors should have an internist or family practitioner as noted above.
- **Physician Assistant (PA)** are medical professionals with graduate-level training who diagnose illness, develop and manage treatment plans, prescribe medications, and often serve as a patient's principal healthcare provider. They practice medicine under the direction and supervision of a licensed physician.
- **Nurse Practitioner (NP)**, nurse with advanced, graduate-level training. Your NP should have experience caring for patients with complex medical histories.

If you have a current PCP, and wish to continue care with them:

- Be sure your cancer treatment team has your PCP's most up-to-date contact information.
- Ask your cancer treatment team to copy your PCP on correspondence or notes related to your diagnosis, treatment, and follow up screenings. (You may be asked to sign forms permitting your cancer treatment team to share this information)
- Be sure your cancer treatment team shares your Survivorship Care Plan with your PCP.

Help for knowing if a specific PCP is right for you now as an AYA?

Questions to help you decide:

- Do you and this provider have a good relationship?
- Do they listen to you?
- Do you feel comfortable talking with them?
- Do they have interest in you as an AYA and understand your AYA self?
- Are they open to communicating, exchanging information and updates with your cancer treatment team?
- Are they interested in learning the details of your cancer experience and working with you to manage your cancer follow-up care?
- Do they understand cancer follow up guidelines, long-term effects?

It is OK to change PCPs if you feel a lack of connection.



General Tips

Look for a primary care provider who:

Is in your health insurance's provider network and covered by your plan.

- "In network" means will be paid for to some extent by your health insurance after meeting any deductible and/or cost sharing and will cover more of the costs than an out-of-network provider.

Is optimally in the same healthcare organization as your cancer care team.

- Can make your medical record sharing and communication easier.
- May allow for easier PCP access to your electronic medical record.
- May reduce the number of patient portals you need to manage and access.

Is in a convenient location.

- Close to where you live/work
- Near public transportation
- Free parking
- Offers virtual health appointments when appropriate reducing your travel burden.

Has appointments that work for you

- Offers appointments when you are available i.e. early morning, evenings, weekends.
- Offers virtual health appointments.

Works with you as a person.

How do I find a primary care provider?

- Begin by asking your oncologist, family members, and friends for recommendations.
- Ask other AYAs for their recommendation. Some PCPs may "specialize" with AYAs. [Connecting to other AYAs](#) and word of mouth can be a good resource to finding a PCP.
- Take your search online:
 - If you have health insurance, search for an in-network provider on your health insurance company's website to potentially save on out-of-pocket costs for the care you need.
 - Many hospital and health system websites offer searchable provider directories that may include patient reviews and provide insights into a PCP's approach to care.
 - Online physician rating sites are another resource for patient reviews, but it is best not to limit your search to these sites. Some highlight physicians who are paid advertisers on the site.

What information will my primary care provider need to manage my cancer follow-up care?

- Ask your oncologist, or other clinician from your cancer treatment team, for a Survivorship Care Plan or other documentation that lists:
 - Diagnosis Date, Cancer Type/Location/Histology Subtype/Stage (if applicable)
 - All cancer-related treatments you have received including surgery (what body part/when), radiation (what body part, how much), systemic therapy (names, dosages).
 - List of possible long-term effects from the cancer and its treatment.
 - Recommended cancer screenings and medical care you may need in the future.
 - Genetic/hereditary risk factor(s) or predisposing conditions, genetic testing results.
 - Names and contact information for members of your cancer treatment team.
 - ***Bring this information to your first appointment with any care provider throughout your life. Because not all electronic medical records can be shared, you will need to keep track of this information.***
 - Let any existing or new provider know that you wish to discuss the documents together.
 - Talking about the details of your treatment may not be easy; however, doing so will help you and your primary care provider build a plan for keeping you healthy and reducing future risks.
- You may need to [self-advocate](#) and speak up for yourself. Some providers will only help if you ask questions or tell them you have an issue or concern. Most then are happy to help.