

Fact Sheet



Healthcare Access in Portsmouth

What is a Primary Care Provider?

A primary care physician is a physician who provides both the first contact for a person with an undiagnosed health concern as well as continuing care of varied medical conditions, not limited by cause, organ system, or diagnosis. The term is primarily used in the United States.

Why is having a Primary Care Provider Important?

A primary care physician serves as the patient's first point of entry into the health care system and as the continuing focal point for all needed health care services.

Primary care providers provide health promotion, disease prevention, health maintenance, counseling, patient education, diagnosis and treatment of acute and chronic illnesses in a variety of health care settings (e.g., office, inpatient, critical care, long-term care, home care, day care, etc.).

Primary care practices are organized to meet the needs of patients with undifferentiated problems, with the vast majority of patient concerns and needs being cared for in the primary care practice itself. Primary care practices are generally located in the community of the patients, thereby facilitating access to health care while maintaining a wide variety of specialty and referral relationships for specific care needs.

When should you visit a Primary Care Provider?

The most important factors in determining how often you should visit your doctor are your age and your risk for contracting disease. Here are some guidelines:

- **30 or younger and healthy:** every two to three years for a checkup. Disease prevention and healthy lifestyles should be discussed with a doctor. Young people may benefit from receiving certain vaccines, especially if travelling internationally. Women should discuss the benefits of regular cervical cancer screening.
- **Ages 30-40:** most people should be getting an annual physical. Common diseases, like obesity, diabetes, and hypertension, often do not cause symptoms and can sometimes be detected early by a doctor. At age 40, women should begin discussing the benefits of regular breast cancer screening with a doctor.
- **50+:** annual physicals become much more important, and both men and women should have colonoscopies performed to screen for colon cancer. Women 50 and over should discuss benefits of regular mammograms with a doctor. People 65 and older are at higher risk for illness and hospitalization from flu and pneumonia. They should discuss the benefits of receiving pneumococcal vaccines and regular influenza vaccines with a doctor.

For people who are overweight, or for whom there is a family history of some type of disease, checkups should occur more

frequently, at the advice of your doctor. During these visits, you should see your family physician, because he/she will have established a history with you, and will know your health situation better than anyone else.

What is an Urgent Care?

Urgent care is a category of walk-in clinic focused on the delivery of ambulatory care in a dedicated medical facility outside of a traditional emergency department. Urgent care centers primarily treat injuries or illnesses requiring immediate care, but not serious enough to require an emergency department visit.

When should I go to an Urgent Care?

The biggest service offered by urgent care facilities is the treatment of common, non life-threatening illnesses and injuries. These facilities should be utilized when your primary care provider is unavailable or outside of regular business hours. In general, the things that are treated in urgent care facilities include:

- Allergic reactions and asthma
- Cuts, burns, bug bites and animal bites
- Falls, sprains, strains, and broken bones

What is an Emergency Department?

The emergency department is located in the hospital and is responsible for the provision of medical and surgical care to patients arriving at the hospital in need of immediate care.

When should I go to an Emergency Department?

If a person or unborn baby could die or be permanently disabled, it is an emergency.

Call 911 to have the emergency team come to you right away if you cannot wait, such as for:

- Choking
- Stop Breathing
- Head injury with passing out, fainting, or confusion
- Injury to neck or spine, particularly if there is loss of feeling or inability to move

- Electric shock or lightning strike
- Severe burn
- Severe chest pain or pressure
- Seizure that lasted 3 to 5 minutes

Go to an emergency department or call 911 for help for problems such as:

- Trouble breathing
- Passing out, fainting
- Pain in the arm or jaw
- Unusual or bad headache, particularly if it started suddenly
- Suddenly not able to speak, see, walk, or move
- Suddenly weak or drooping on one side of the body
- Dizziness or weakness that does not go away
- Inhaled smoke or poisonous fumes
- Heavy bleeding
- Possible broken bone, loss of movement, particularly if the bone is pushing through the skin
- Deep wound
- Serious burn
- Coughing or throwing up blood

The emergency department should be utilized only in extreme life-threatening situations.

Remember, if a life-threatening event occurs, call **911** for immediate attention.

Local Primary Care Providers:

KDMC 740-991-4000

SOMC 740-356-5000

Compass Community Health 740-355-7102

Portsmouth City Health Department 740-353-8863

For more information, please contact Portsmouth City Health Department at 740-353-8863