



Consumer Health Decisions # 1

Choosing a New Healthcare Provider

If you are in a position to select a new healthcare provider, the first step is to determine why you left your old provider. Common reasons for choosing a new healthcare provider include:

- Location
 - Did your provider relocate or retire? If so, ask him or her for a referral to a new provider.
- Relationship
 - Did you and your provider have a poor relationship? If so, think about what things you would want in a relationship with a future healthcare provider.
- Insurance Coverage
 - Have you had a change in your health insurance? If so, find out which providers are affiliated with your new insurance company **and** which providers are accepting new patients.

Each individual also has personal criteria that must be considered when selecting a new healthcare provider. Some questions you may want to ask yourself when choosing a new provider include:

- How far am I willing to travel for a provider?
- Is the office easily accessible, particularly if I have a disability?
- Is it important to me what age or gender the provider is?

Some additional questions you may want to ask before you choose a new provider might include:

- What is the provider's education, training, and experience?
- What days and hours is the provider available?
- How long in advance must appointments be scheduled?
- Does the provider accept phone or e-mail questions?
- What hospital does the provider refer patients to? What about referrals when the provider is unavailable?

Choosing a new healthcare provider is a big decision, so be sure to spend some time to make a good choice that you will be satisfied with.

Discussion Questions:

1. What would constitute a "good relationship" with a healthcare provider?
2. How would you find out which healthcare providers are covered by your insurance plan?
3. What questions might you ask yourself (in addition to those listed above) when selecting a new healthcare provider?