

Five Ways to Get the Right Amount of Health Care

1. Talk to your primary care doctor

Having a relationship with a primary care provider is the first step to getting the right health care. Work with your doctor to develop a care plan that spells out what to do if you get sick, when to seek care and where to go for that care. If you're facing a chronic health condition such as asthma, depression, diabetes or heart disease, having a care plan in place is especially important.

2. Call a nurse line for information and advice

If you think you might need care but you are not sure, you can call the nurse line or medical help line available through your doctor's office or health plan. Talking with a nurse can help you decide whether or not you need to come in for an appointment and if so, how soon you need to be seen and by whom.

3. Ask questions

Before making decisions about your care and certain tests or treatments, make sure you understand why the care is needed, what it is supposed to do and what the risks and benefits will be. It's your body, your time and your money. Ask questions until you get the answers you need. If you don't know what kinds of questions to ask, visit www.ahrq.gov/questions.

4. Look for information on your own

Finding reliable health information from reputable sources can help you understand your health condition and treatment choices and know what questions to ask about your care. Refer to "How to Find Trustworthy Health Information on the Internet" available on the Own Your Health website (www.wacommunitycheckup.org/ownyourhealth).

5. Get a second opinion (if necessary)

When your doctor has made a recommendation and you are faced with a major decision, it may be wise to check with another doctor as well. Your doctor should not take it as a criticism or lack of confidence on your part, and you should make sure to get your records from the first doctor so that you don't get any unnecessary care, like repeats of tests.