

A Guide to Different Doctors & Specialists

Going to the doctor can feel overwhelming, especially with so many different types of medical professionals. Some handle general health, while others focus on specific conditions. This guide explains **who's who** in healthcare to help you understand what kind of doctor to see when needed.



General Doctors Primary Care & Routine Health

Primary Care Physician (PCP):

Your main doctor for regular check-ups, illnesses, and managing ongoing health conditions. (ex., colds, infections, diabetes). Most people should have a PCP.

Nurse Practitioner (NP) or Physician Assistant (PA): Provide similar care as a PCP, including diagnosing illnesses and prescribing medications.

Internist (Internal Medicine Doctor): Specializes in adult health and manages chronic conditions like diabetes and arthritis.



Mental Health & Brain Specialists

Psychiatrist: Diagnoses and treats mental health conditions; can prescribe medication (ex., anxiety, depression, PTSD).

Psychologist: Provides therapy and counseling but does not prescribe medications.

Neurologist: Treats brain and nervous system issues (ex., seizures, migraines, movement disorders).



Dental & Mouth Health

Dentist: Cares for teeth, gums, and mouth health. Everyone should see a dentist every 6 months.

Orthodontist: Straightens teeth and corrects jaw alignment with braces or aligners.



Heart, Lungs, & Digestive Health

Cardiologist (Heart Doctor): Treats heart-related issues like high blood pressure and heart disease.

Pulmonologist (Lung Doctor): Helps with breathing problems like asthma and chronic coughs.

Gastroenterologist (Stomach Doctor): Treats digestive issues such as acid reflux, IBS, and constipation.



Bones, Muscles, & Pain Management

Orthopedist (Bone & Joint Doctor): Helps with broken bones, arthritis, and chronic pain.

Rheumatologist: Treats autoimmune and inflammatory conditions like lupus and fibromyalgia.



Eyes, Ears, & Skin Health

Ophthalmologist (Eye Doctor): Diagnoses and treats eye diseases like glaucoma and cataracts.

Optometrist (Vision Doctor): Checks vision and prescribes glasses or contacts.

Otolaryngologist (Ear, Nose and Throat Doctor): Treats ear, nose, and throat conditions like sinus issues and hearing loss.

Dermatologist (Skin Doctor): Manages skin, hair, and nail conditions like acne and eczema.



Reproductive & Hormonal Health

Gynecologist (Women's Health Doctor): Specializes in menstrual care, contraception, and reproductive health.

Urologist (Urinary & Reproductive Health Doctor): Treats bladder, kidney, and reproductive system issues.

Endocrinologist (Hormone Doctor): Helps with hormonal imbalances, thyroid conditions, and diabetes.



Final Tips: How to Find the Right Doctor

- Ask your Primary Care Physician for referrals to specialists.
- Look for Autism-friendly providers who understand sensory needs and communication preferences.

Prepare questions ahead of time and write down your symptoms to discuss.

Request accommodations like a quiet waiting room or written instructions. Healthcare can be confusing but understanding these specialties makes it easier to get the care you need!