

HEALTH NAVIGATOR, POWERED BY PINNACLECARE

Choosing the right healthcare provider

Finding the right doctor can be challenging. With numerous primary care physicians and specialists available, it's difficult to determine who best fits your health needs. Options range from family doctors and internists to various specialists like cardiologists and neurologists, making the choice overwhelming.

Types of medical providers

A **primary care physician** (**PCP**) is your main healthcare provider who offers comprehensive, ongoing medical care. They are typically the first point of contact for most health issues and can treat a wide range of conditions. PCPs provide preventive care, manage chronic conditions, and coordinate your overall healthcare needs. They can refer you to specialists when necessary and help you navigate the healthcare system.

PCPs include:	
Primary care physicians	Provide comprehensive, ongoing care and serving as the first point of contact for patients.
Family medicine doctors	Physicians treat patients of all ages, focusing on preventive care and managing various conditions for entire families.
Internal medicine doctors	Specialize adult medicine, diagnosing and treating complex diseases in adults.
Pediatricians	Specialize in the health and development of children from birth to young adulthood. Pediatrics is a subdiscipline of primary care with associated training and certification.
Geriatricians	Specialize in elderly care (65+). They manage age-related health issues, multiple chronic conditions, and promote healthy aging. Geriatrics is a subdiscipline of primary care with associated training and certification.

In addition to PCPs, **physician assistants** (PAs) and **nurse practitioners** (NPs) play an important role in primary care, especially given the current supply and demand challenges facing medical doctors. These advanced practice providers help address the growing shortage of PCPs while maintaining high-quality patient care.

Advanced Practice Providers (APPs):
Healthcare professionals, specifically Physician Assistants (PAs) and Nurse Practitioners (NPs), complement PCPs in delivering primary care services. These practitioners help alleviate the shortage of PCPs while maintaining high-quality patient care. APPs are qualified to perform many physician duties, including diagnosis, prescription, and treatment planning, thereby increasing healthcare access, improving resource utilization, and reducing patient wait times.

A **medical specialist** is a doctor who has advanced training, certification, and clinical focus and expertise. Specialists focus on particular body systems, diseases, or patient populations. They typically see patients for more complex or specific health issues that require specialized knowledge, skills, or procedures. You may be referred to a specialist by your PCP for conditions that require more focused care or advanced treatments.



Medical specialties include:	
Cardiovascular system	• Cardiologists (heart) • Vascular surgeons (blood vessels) • Cardiothoracic surgeons (heart and chest surgery)
Nervous system	• Neurologists • Neurosurgeons (brain and spinal surgery)
Digestive and excretory systems	• Gastroenterologists (digestive system) • Urologists (urinary tract, bladder, prostate) • Nephrologists (kidneys)
Respiratory system	• Pulmonologists (lungs) • Otolaryngologists (ear, nose, and throat)
Musculoskeletal system	• Orthopedists (bones and joints) • Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (non-surgical) • Rheumatologists (autoimmune diseases)
Reproductive system	• Gynecologists (female reproductive system) • Obstetricians (pregnancy and childbirth)
Endocrine system	• Endocrinologists (hormone system)
Integumentary system	• Dermatologists (skin)
Sensory organs	• Ophthalmologists (eyes)
Blood and immune system	• Hematologists (blood disorders) • Allergists/Immunologists (allergies and immune system) • Oncologists (cancer)
Mental health	• Psychiatrists (mental health)
Surgical and pain management	• Anesthesiologists (pain management and surgical anesthesia) • Plastic surgeons (reconstructive and cosmetic surgery)
Diagnostic specialties	• Radiologists (medical imaging) • Pathologists (disease diagnosis from biopsy or surgical specimens)

Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO): Versatile physicians bridging primary and specialty care. A DO is a licensed physician who can be a PCP or specialist. They receive additional training in osteopathic manipulative treatment for pain. DOs focus on preventive care, considering lifestyle and environmental factors, and emphasize the body's natural healing ability.

Let Health Navigator help you find the right provider

Health Navigator can help you find the right healthcare providers to meet your needs and treatment goals. Our Care Advisors and Medical Directors will evaluate your current care team and assist in connecting you with appropriate in-network doctors or specialists. Contact us today to ensure you have the resources for optimal care.

Visit **sunlife.com/healthnav**, or call **888-352-4969**. Representatives are available Monday-Friday, 8:00am-6:00pm (ET).



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