

JANUARY 2024

NEW YEAR PREPAREDNESS

# CARE CONNECTION

## KNOW WHERE TO GO

Did you know that an estimated 60% of visits to the Emergency Department (ED) by FMCP participants are not for true emergencies?

Unfortunately, this is the case around the country. Millions of Americans use the ED for non-life-threatening conditions like back pain, earaches, coughs, headaches, upper respiratory infections, seasonal allergies, and more. But these simple conditions could be treated just as well, and even more appropriately, at a primary care doctor, urgent care center, retail clinic, or via telemedicine.

You have several options for where to receive care, in addition to the ED. Let the guide below help you.

<p><b>PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER</b></p> <p><b>What it is:</b> Your primary care provider (PCP) is the person you go to for your standard health and wellness care. You should already be seeing your PCP annually for your preventive health and wellness checks, but it's also great if you can get to your normal PCP's office when you're sick.</p> <p><b>What they can do:</b> Your PCP can prescribe medications and order any tests or screenings that you might need. Your PCP may also be most familiar with your medical health history.</p> <p><b>When to go:</b> You have a non-emergency health condition or concern and are able to wait for a standard or sick appointment.</p>	<p><b>TELEMEDICINE</b></p> <p><b>What it is:</b> Telemedicine services like LiveHealth Online or Teladoc Health let you visit with a healthcare provider or receive a medical expert second opinion remotely via your smartphone or computer. Telemedicine only requires an internet-connected device, so you don't need to travel to an office.</p> <p><b>What they can do:</b> Telemedicine services are best for common, non-emergency health conditions (like rashes, allergies, eye or ear infections, colds, flu, etc.) and can provide certain prescriptions that you can get filled at your local pharmacy.</p> <p><b>When to go:</b> You have a common illness or need a medical expert second opinion.</p>
<p><b>RETAIL HEALTH CLINIC</b></p> <p><b>What it is:</b> A retail health clinic is a walk-in clinic located in a retail store, supermarket, or drug store (for example, a CVS MinuteClinic or Rite Aid RediClinic). Retail health clinics have on-site pharmacies.</p> <p><b>What they can do:</b> Retail health clinics treat minor or uncomplicated issues, provide preventive health services, and offer vaccinations. As needed, they can fill prescriptions.</p> <p><b>When to go:</b> You have a minor or uncomplicated non-emergency health issue that you want in-person treatment for.</p>	<p><b>URGENT CARE CENTER</b></p> <p><b>What it is:</b> An urgent care center is often considered the bridge between traditional primary care providers and emergency departments. These walk-in clinics offer urgent, non-emergency care.</p> <p><b>What they can do:</b> Urgent Care centers are setup to assist patients with an illness or injury that does not appear to be life-threatening, but also can't wait until the next day. They can also prescribe, and sometimes dispense, common medications.</p> <p><b>When to go:</b> You have a concern that, while non-life-threatening, still needs medical attention within 24 hours.</p>

Oftentimes, telemedicine is the quickest and most convenient way to solve your common, non-emergent medical issues — with zero out-of-pocket cost for LiveHealth Online and Teladoc Health, no travel needed, and far less wait time than the emergency room! You can access LiveHealth Online at [www.livehealthonline.com](http://www.livehealthonline.com) and Teladoc Health at [www.teladoc.com/fmcp](http://www.teladoc.com/fmcp). Both also have apps available to download from the App Store or Google Play.



Please use your discretion and best judgment when choosing where to receive medical care, especially in the event of a true emergency and/or potentially life-threatening illness or injury.

*Please note: LiveHealth Online is only available to members who have their medical benefits through one of the FMCP PPO Plans. Teladoc Health services are not applicable to members who have their medical coverage through Kaiser.*

### WELLNESS TIP!

#### ADULT RSV VACCINE

Although most commonly associated with infants, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a major problem for older adults too.

The CDC recommends adults 60+ years of age have the option to receive a single dose of RSV vaccine, based on discussions between the patient and their health care provider. This vaccine is recommended to be administered from September through January for most of the US.

Sources: [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov)

### REMINDER

#### MAKE SURE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION IS UP-TO-DATE

If you moved or received a new phone number, please be sure to let us know! Having your most up-to-date contact information is how we can ensure you receive important updates about your medical plan.

**You can check the contact information we have on file for you in your Member Self-Service Online Portal account. Please call the Benefit Office at 877-937-9602 if you need to update this information.**

## COLD, FLU, COVID-19, OR RSV?

If you're feeling under the weather this winter, you may struggle to figure out what might be causing your symptoms. Colds, flu, RSV, and COVID-19 often have similar symptoms that might be difficult to distinguish. This chart from the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) can help you determine which respiratory illness may be causing your symptoms.

	COLD	FLU	COVID-19	RSV
ACHES	○○○	×××	○○○	○
DIFFICULTY BREATHING	○	○	×××	○○○
FATIGUE	○○○	×××	×××	○
FEVER	○	×××	○○○	○○○
LOSS OF TASTE OR SMELL	○	○	○○○	○
SORE THROAT	×××	○○○	×××	○
WHEEZING	○	○	○	×××

Common symptoms may include cough, headaches, sneezing, runny nose, and congestion. Different symptoms may include:

Legend: ○ Rarely, ○ Sometimes, × Often

As always, if you're feeling ill — and especially if you suspect you have the flu, RSV, or COVID-19 — you should make sure that you seek medical attention as soon as possible to ensure that you receive proper treatment and feel better faster. Consider also getting vaccinated for the flu, COVID-19, and [RSV \(if 32-36 weeks pregnant or age 60+\)](#) to protect yourself and others.

Good health habits can help stop the spread of germs and prevent respiratory illnesses like flu or COVID-19. Cover your cough, wash your hands with soap and water often, and avoid people who are sick. Scan the QR code to the left for more tips for avoiding the common cold this sick season!

Sources: [NFID](https://www.nfid.org), [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov)

## CHOOSING A PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER (PCP)

Did you know that nearly 1/3 of Americans do not have a Primary Care Provider (PCP)? If you're among them, it's definitely time to find a healthcare provider you can trust.

Here are some tips from Blue Cross Blue Shield to help you find the best-fit healthcare provider for you.

- CHECK YOUR NETWORK.** An in-network provider can help to save you time, stress, and money when it comes to your healthcare claims! Out-of-network providers leave you responsible for higher costs. FMCP PPO members can utilize Anthem's Find a Doctor search tool to locate providers in our network.
- LOOK FOR EXPERTISE THAT FITS YOUR NEEDS.** There are many different types of primary care, ranging from pediatricians to geriatricians. It's important to pick a provider with the specialty that suits your needs. Some of the most common types of practitioners include:
  - Internal medicine doctors:** Internal medicine doctors specialize only in treating adults. They are experts at balancing an adult's regular preventive care needs with specialized care needs. They are well versed in conditions that can pop up in adulthood, like high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes.
  - Pediatricians:** Pediatricians specialize in caring for children, from birth through early adulthood. They're trained to treat minor illnesses and injuries, along with more complex conditions. They are exclusively focused on children's healthcare and know how to help children feel comfortable.
  - Family medicine doctors:** The unique benefit of family doctors is that they care for your whole family. They see babies, children, parents, and grandparents. No matter who in your family is sick, you have one person to call who knows your family history and can provide highly personalized care. Family doctors can be a great "one-stop-shop" for the whole family, so to speak.
  - Internal medicine-pediatrics doctors (med-peds):** Internal medicine-pediatrics doctors are two types of doctors in one. They're board certified in both internal medicine and pediatrics. These doctors care for kids and adults, and can help prevent, treat, and diagnose diseases. Many patients consider a med-peds doctor because they appreciate knowing their physician has a dual board certification as both a pediatrician and an internist.
  - OB-GYNs:** OB-GYN doctors are experts in women's health, specifically female reproductive health. They provide routine women's health services and screenings like Pap tests, pelvic exams, and STI testing. They also care for you during pregnancy and menopause. Even though OB-GYNs can offer some basic preventive care for treatment, they should not be used exclusively as your PCP.
- ASK FOR REFERRALS.** Ask friends and family about their primary care providers. If they already see a provider or specialist, you can ask them for a recommendation. If you move to a new town, state, or country, ask your current provider if they might know of a good fit for you in your new area.
- CONSIDER THE LOGISTICS.** You can filter your list further by searching for providers near to your home or work. Also, be sure to consider the office's available hours, if they are accepting new patients, and if they speak additional languages, if needed.
- GO FOR A VISIT.** Like shoes, you won't know if you have the "right fit" until you try them on. Set up an appointment with your top choice to get a sense of the office environment and their demeanor in person. Be sure you feel comfortable with the environment, the staff, and the provider themselves. Talk with them about any current conditions and your medical history. Be sure you are on the same page when it comes to managing any chronic conditions. Also, take into account the communication of the practice — Are phones answered in a timely manner? Do they offer a patient portal? Is the staff friendly and efficient? How long is the wait to see your provider once you arrive in the office? These answers may make the difference between a PCP that's perfect on paper and one that's just right for you.

Remember that your PCP is your healthcare advocate and guide. It's important to see them regularly. Be upfront and honest about any problems you're facing. Notify them of any changes to your diet, exercise, medications, etc. Ask any questions you have about your symptoms, treatment, diagnoses, or test results so you can best understand your health.

Source: [BCBS](https://www.bcbs.com), [HealthPartners.com](https://www.healthpartners.com)

## IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION