

How to Choose a Hospital

Use this convenient checklist to help you find the right hospital for your care.

Choosing a hospital for your care can sometimes be a difficult — and overwhelming — experience. ProHealth Care has developed this 3-step guide to help make the process of choosing a hospital easier.

STEP 1:

- Understand What's Important to You.** Make a list of the top 3 – 5 things that are most important to you about hospital care. These can range anywhere from the hospital's location, to friendliness of the nurses and staff, to good outcomes for your particular procedure or treatment, to the quality of the specialists, to accommodations for dietary restrictions, to being treated as a whole — not sick — individual, to insurance coverage, costs and more.

STEP 2:

- Seek Out Information**

You'll want to answer the following questions:

1. Does the hospital have experience with my condition?
2. Has my condition been successfully treated at this hospital?
3. Does my doctor have privileges at this hospital?
4. Is the hospital accredited by the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Health Care Organizations (JCAHO)?
5. How does the hospital's quality compare with others in my area?
6. Does my insurance cover care at this hospital?
7. Have my friends, family or colleagues had positive experiences at this hospital?

Sources of Information

- **Your Primary Care Physician.** Your primary care physician is one of the single best sources of information to help you choose a hospital that is best for you. He or she has an insider perspective on the overall quality of care, outcomes for your particular procedure or treatment, friendliness of staff, availability and expertise of specialists, and patient and staff satisfaction.

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- **Hospital/Health System Web Site.** Check the hospital's or health system's web site to find out about services for your particular condition or treatment. You can also search the site for awards and recognitions that indicate the quality of care provided either overall or for specific conditions. Some hospitals and health systems, also report out their own quality and patient satisfaction results on their Web sites, as well as publish charge information for commonly performed procedures. Visit www.prohealthcare.org to view hospital charges.
- **National, State and Consumer Group Quality Web Sites.** You can learn about a hospital's quality and patient satisfaction by searching the following sites:
 - Leapfrog: www.leapfroggroup.org
 - Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS): www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov
 - Wisconsin CheckPoint: www.wicheckpoint.org
- **The Joint Commission.** Hospitals voluntarily choose to be surveyed by The Joint Commission to ensure they meet certain quality standards. The Commission's standards include quality of staff and equipment, as well as the success in treating and curing patients. If a hospital meets these standards, it becomes accredited. Reviews are completed every three years, and most hospitals participate.

You can order a report on the hospital(s) you are reviewing free of charge by calling (630) 792-5800 or visiting www.jointcommission.org.

- **Friends, Family & Colleagues.** Your friends, family and colleagues are invaluable sources of information about hospital care from the patient perspective. Ask them which hospital(s) they've used and how they rate the care they received. Would they go back for care? Have they recommended the hospital since their experience there?
- **Your Insurance Company.** Be sure to check with your insurance company to find out if your selected hospital is in your plan. Your insurance company might also have data or additional information that can be helpful to you in making your choice.

STEP 3:

- Compare Your Notes.** Review answers to the questions listed above. How well do these answers match up with your "most important" list? Does one facility clearly stand out? If not, you can always share your information with your primary care physician and work with him or her to make a final decision.

For more information, please visit www.prohealthcare.org. For a referral to a physician who meets your needs, call ProHealth Care's Physician Referral Service at 1-800-544-2745. Our physician referral specialists are happy to help and want to make sure that you choose the best physician to meet your health care needs.

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