PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

A Guide for Adolescents and Young Adults (AYAs): How to Find a Primary Care Provider

This information explains how to find a primary care provider (PCP). It also answers some frequently asked questions.

What is a PCP?

A PCP is a trained medical professional who helps you manage your health. They provide routine and preventative healthcare services, such as:

- Physicals.
- Health and cancer screenings.
- Vaccines (shots).
- Non-emergency medical care.
- Helping you manage chronic conditions, such as asthma or high blood pressure. Chronic conditions last for a long time or keep coming back.

Who provides primary care?

Different types of healthcare providers can be your PCP, including:

- Doctors who specialize in internal medicine or family medicine. These doctors focus on general healthcare.
- Advanced practice providers (APPs). APPs are a group of medical providers that includes physician assistants (PAs) and nurse practitioners (NPs). Some

offices have APPs who work with doctors to manage your care.

- Pediatricians. A pediatrician is a doctor who specializes in the health needs of babies, children, adolescents, and young adults.
- Gynecologists (GY-neh-KAH-loh-jists). A gynecologist is a doctor who specializes in female health.
- Obstetricians (OB-steh-TRIH-shuns). An obstetrician is a doctor who specializes in pregnancy and childbirth.

If you have a gynecologist or obstetrician as your PCP, we recommend also seeing a doctor who specializes in internal medicine. This is to make sure you have someone to help you with your general healthcare needs.

What if I do not have a PCP?

If you do not have a PCP, now is the best time to find one. It's important to have a PCP you can go to for your healthcare questions and needs. You can also go to your PCP for medical needs that are not related to your cancer diagnosis.

Over time, your PCP will get to know your medical history, health goals, and lifestyle. They can help you prevent health issues, maintain a healthy lifestyle, and treat routine medical issues. You'll want to choose a PCP you feel comfortable with so you can have honest conversations.

Here are some tips to help you find a PCP:

- If you have health insurance, use your health insurance company's website to search for an "in-network" provider. This is a healthcare provider who works with your insurance company. This can help you save money on your care.
- You can also call your insurance company to help you find an in-network provider.
- If you do not have health insurance, you can use free healthcare clinics in your community.
- Ask friends and family for suggestions on PCPs they have worked with.

- Look around your community and call local PCP offices to find out if they're taking new patients. Remember to make sure they take your insurance.

How will my PCP know about my treatment?

Your MSK care team can send your PCP a detailed report of your care at MSK. This report will include information about your treatment, your most recent test results, and recommendations for follow-up care. Your PCP can also reach out to your MSK care team at any time.

What other care will I need?

We will make recommendations to help you prevent or manage any late or long-term effects from your treatment. We will also recommend vaccinations and screenings for other cancers.

You should also plan to:

- Have a physical exam with your PCP every year.
- Get the flu vaccine every year during flu season (October to April).
- Ask your PCP when you should get the pneumonia and shingles vaccines.
- Have your cholesterol checked every year.
- Maintain a heart healthy diet.
- Maintain a healthy body weight.
- Avoid the sun and use sunscreen when outside.
- Follow your PCP's recommendations for exercise.
- Stay up to date with cancer screenings.
- Ask your PCP any questions you have about your health.

Your Care at MSK

At MSK, we have a plan of care for people who have finished treatment for cancer. This plan is based on your needs. After your treatment at MSK is complete, you can start seeing your PCP more regularly for your healthcare needs. This transition may seem scary at first, but we're here to help you.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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