



TIP SHEET: Finding a Geriatric Medicine Primary Care Doctor

Q: Are you around 55-years-old or older and in need of a new primary care doctor?

A: A Geriatric Medicine physician has received additional training in the treatment and care of older adults, usually 55 or over. It's important to find one you can trust, with whom you can communicate well and establish a relationship.

Q: What is a Geriatric Medicine primary care doctor?

A: A Geriatric Medicine primary care physician is an internal medicine or family practice physician who has additional training in caring for older adults (verses a pediatrician whom has additional training in caring for babies and children.)

As we advance through life and reach the ages of 55 and beyond, often we develop health issues that are directly related to the aging effects on the body. Sometimes a number of different medications may be needed to treat varying conditions. The geriatric medicine physician carefully monitors the effects of drugs and the different combinations, trying to minimize potential drug interactions. They work to not only treat the conditions and symptoms, but to prevent their reoccurrence.

The geriatric medicine primary care physician will work with you to coordinate all of your health care and determine if you require care from an additional specialist, such as a cardiologist, orthopedist, urologist, neurologist, rheumatologist, dermatologist, etc.

If you are lucky enough to be extremely healthy and do not have any health issues and do not need any medications, you may not need a geriatric medicine doctor.

Q: What training do Geriatric Medicine doctors receive?

A: In addition to the training as an Internal Medicine physician or Family Practice physician, our AHC Geriatric Medicine physicians have

- completed an additional full one-year fellowship training program specific to geriatric medicine patients.
- received training to manage complex ailments and multiple medical needs.

- received additional training in helping their patients prevent future health problems and live healthier, age slower, and promote a higher quality of living.

Q: How do Nurse Practitioners work with the Geriatric Medicine physicians?

A: Nurse Practitioners (NPs) or Advanced Registered Nurses (ARNPs) are licensed and complete bachelor degree nursing programs. Then they work to gain experience and complete graduate-level training to gain a masters degree and, in some cases, a PhD. Each NP must pass a rigorous national exam before being licensed in the State of Florida.

The NP or ARNP is very well trained to care for the patient in a variety of ways:

- Sick and well visits
- Make diagnoses
- Perform physical exams and routine tests
- Administer immunizations and injections
- Administer medications
- Educate patients

A physician supervises each patient's progress. Most patients find that working with a NP, in concert with their primary care physician, offers them optimum care.

Q: What are some tips for finding the right Geriatric Medicine physician?

A: First, determine what is important to you. Make a list of things that matter the most when choosing a doctor. For example:

- Is it important to you to have a doctor with the extra training in treating older adults?
- Do you have a number of health issues?
- Is preventive care important to you?
- Is location important to you?
- Do you need to choose a doctor based on your insurance requirements?
- Do you prefer a male or female physician?
- Do you require a doctor who speaks a certain language?
- Do you consider a doctor's age important when making your decision?
- Do you prefer an MD or a DO?
- Is it important the doctor be board certified?

Ask your insurance company, health maintenance organization or managed care plan if they have a panel of physicians from which you should select.