

Three Tips for **Getting Smarter About Health Care**

The health care landscape is changing quickly. Everyone—individuals, families and companies—is paying much more for health care today. Given all these changes, it's time to consider how we can learn and do more to get health care that works best—for our health and for our money.

Managing your health and health care can feel overwhelming. Luckily, more research is available every day to help identify the best treatments, doctors and hospitals to help us seek out and get the best care. Here are three steps you can take—starting now—to get smarter about health care:

1 Use the best doctors and hospitals

Seek and choose highly rated providers.

- Search the Internet for quality ratings or quality “report cards.” Many sites provide hospital quality ratings. Ratings of doctors and medical groups are also becoming more available. Some insurance companies also offer quality ratings on their websites.
- Look for trustworthy websites run by government, nonprofit, educational or medical organizations. These usually end in .gov, .edu or .org.
- Where to start:
 - o [Hospital Compare](#) — hospital performance reports
 - o [Comparing Health Care Quality: A National Directory](#) — national and local reports on health care quality across America

2 Get the right care

Learn and ask questions about your care and treatment options.

- Do your homework; go online to learn about your symptoms or condition.
- Ask your doctor what the latest thinking is about the best treatment for your condition.
- If your doctor mentions a test or procedure, ask if it is really needed or if there are simpler or safer options.
- Where to start:
 - o [Medline Plus](#) — up-to-date information about diseases, conditions and treatments
 - o [Choosing Wisely](#) — important information on common tests and procedures



3 Choose care that works best

Partner with your doctor to develop a care plan based on medical research and your preferences.

- Make sure your doctor or nurse listens to you and explains things in a way you understand. If something isn't clear, ask questions.
- Ask about the pros and cons of treatment choices and discuss how well they mesh with your preferences and lifestyle.
- See if there are resources that make the options, benefits, and risks clearer for your medical decision. This kind of information may be available from your doctor, your health plan, or online.
- Where to start:
 - o [Informed Medical Decisions Foundation](#) — decision aids to help understand treatment options
 - o [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#) — guides on conditions, treatments and getting quality care