

any other professional.

#### 4. Check Court Records

To learn if any malpractice lawsuits have been filed against a physician, you may check the county's "civil index." This index is typically maintained by the clerk's office of the Circuit Court in your county.

If there are recent malpractice lawsuits, talk to the doctor for an explanation. Always keep in mind that anyone can file a lawsuit at any time. The existence of a lawsuit does not automatically indicate the physician is incompetent or negligent. A pattern of lawsuits, however, may be cause for concern.

#### 5. Schedule an Appointment

When you have decided on a physician, make an appointment to meet in person with him or her. It is better to meet the doctor in a consultation appointment rather than in an emergency. This also provides you an opportunity to decide if you are comfortable with your new doctor, the facility, and support staff.

It is equally important that the physician feels comfortable with treating your individual problems and meeting your needs as a patient. Thus, he or she may ask you personal questions about your medical history, and the types of treatment you have received in the past. Be truthful in answering his or her questions since the quality of care you receive greatly depends on your honesty.

#### If you have a Problem with your Physician

The Division is responsible for the investigation and prosecution of physicians and surgeons that have violated the Illinois Medical Practice Act.

If you feel your physician has violated the law, you

are encouraged to submit a complaint on our website at <https://idfpr.illinois.gov/admin/complaints.html> or contact the Division's Complaint Intake Unit at 312-814-6910.

<https://idfpr.illinois.gov/dpr.html>

- License Look-up
- Submit a complaint

**Licensing and Testing**  
320 West Washington Street, 3rd Floor  
Springfield, Illinois 62786  
General Assistance: 1-888-473-4858

**Enforcement, Complaints, and Investigations**  
555 West Monroe Street - Suite 500  
Chicago, Illinois 60661  
Complaint Intake Unit: 312-814-6910  
General Assistance: 1-888-473-4858

**TTY Line: 1-866-325-4949**

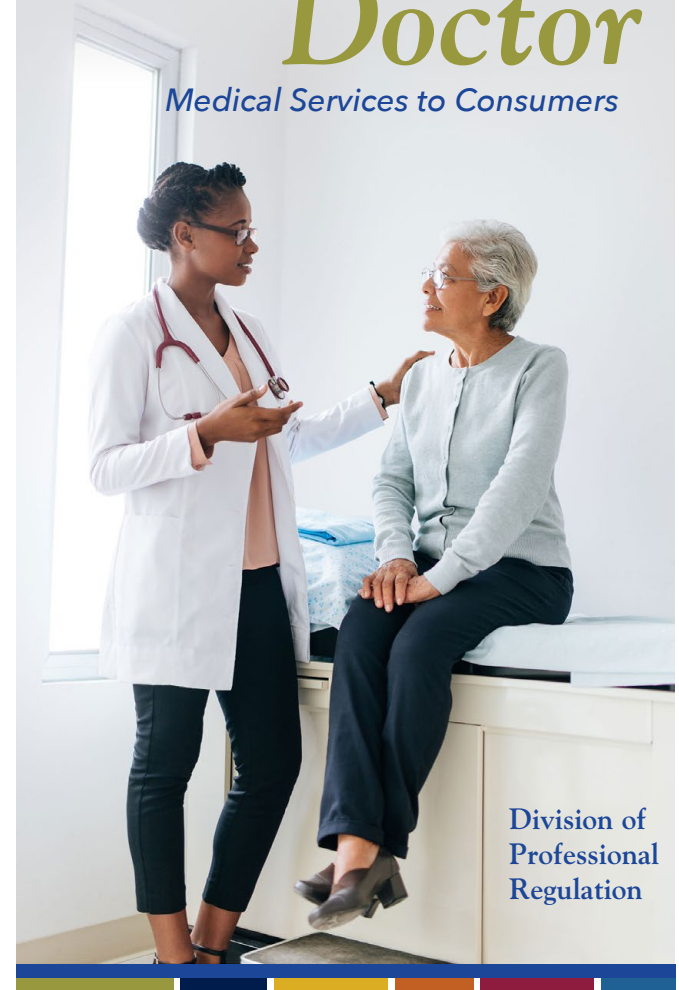
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State of Illinois  
Illinois Department of Financial and  
Professional Regulation

# Choosing Your Doctor

*Medical Services to Consumers*



Division of  
Professional  
Regulation



**IDFPR**

Illinois Department of  
Financial and Professional Regulation

## What services does the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation, Division of Professional Regulation provide to consumers?

The Division of Professional Regulation of the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation is a government agency that licenses and disciplines physicians and surgeons, chiropractors, physician assistants, and more than 70 other professions that consumers come in contact with daily. The Division provides two principal types of consumer services relating to doctors: license information and discipline against doctors' licenses.

IDFPR is not a physician referral service; that is, we cannot direct you to a physician in your community to be your doctor. However, this brochure should make choosing a doctor easier for you.

### How to Choose Your Doctor

Choosing a qualified medical doctor is an important element of your health care. You should have a primary care physician who is responsible for your overall medical care. In the event you need a specialist, your primary care physician will generally refer you to one.

Many specialists will not accept a patient unless he or she has been referred by a primary care physician. In addition, many insurance plans will not pay for a specialist's care unless you have been referred.

The main types of primary care physicians are:

- Family Medicine
- Internal Medicine (specialist in the diagnosis of internal diseases and disorders)
- Pediatrician

### 1. Gather Names

If you have health insurance, you should first contact your insurance company and find out if there is a list (or "panel") of physicians who participate in your plan. Many insurance companies, including Preferred Provider Organizations and Health Maintenance Organizations, will only pay physicians who are approved providers that have agreed to certain conditions for payment. If your company has such a panel, you will need to choose from the list of members.

If you have moved recently, your physician from your previous community may be able to recommend someone in your new area.

Ask friends or family if they know a physician who has provided quality care to them in the past.

Contact your local medical society to see if they offer a physician referral service. If so, they can provide you names of physicians in your area based on the kind of doctor you need. Hospitals and local clinics can also give you names of physicians to consider.

### 2. Ask Questions

When looking for any type of service, you should first check qualifications and references. In finding a good doctor, you should do the same by calling or writing the physician you are considering, or talking to the doctor's staff. Be prepared to openly discuss your individual needs and ask the following questions:

- Are you accepting new patients?
- Which insurance plans do you accept?
- Do you have staff privileges at a hospital? If so, has that hospital ever restricted your privileges? Can you admit patients to the hospital? (Privileges means that the hospital has agreed to let a doctor use its facilities.)
- Do you practice independently, or are you a member

of a medical group?

- If you are in a medical group, how many members are in it, and will they take your calls in your absence?
- Are you Board Certified in your specialty? Which one(s)?

**NOTE:** The American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) is a private organization that certifies specialty boards. Call 1-866-275-2267 between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. Eastern Standard Time to check if a doctor's certifying board is ABMS approved. The ABMS can also give you the phone number of the certifying board so that you can verify your physician through them.

### 3. Access IDFPR's Website

When you have selected a physician that fits your needs as a health care consumer, access the Division's License Look-up feature at <https://online-dfpr.micropact.com/lookup/licenselookup.aspx> to verify the doctor's license. License Look-up will provide you the doctor's license number, current status (active, probation, etc.), original licensure date, license expiration date, and if the doctor has ever been disciplined.

If a physician has been disciplined dating back to 1990, our website will provide you the details regarding the action. Disciplinary action may include a fine, reprimand, probation, suspension, or revocation.

If you do not have access to the Internet, you may write to:

Division of Professional Regulation  
Illinois Department of Financial and  
Professional Regulation  
Attention: LMU1  
320 West Washington Street, 3rd Floor  
Springfield, Illinois 62786

**NOTE:** The Division cannot recommend a doctor or