What you can do to choose the right doctor for you.

Choosing a doctor is one of the most important decisions you can make. You want to find a doctor whom you feel comfortable with, and who you think can give you the best medical care and advice.

Here are some things to think about when choosing a doctor:

Make sure the doctor is right for you

- **Find out how long it takes to get an appointment.** Make sure the doctor can see you without a long delay.

- **Find out how you can reach the doctor if you have an emergency.** Ask if the doctor sets aside time for patients in need of urgent care—or makes other arrangements to make sure you are seen quickly.

- **Ask who will be part of your health care team.** Find out what other medical staff are available to see you (such as physician assistants or nurse practitioners), if the doctor is not available.

- **Ask if the office is open in the evening or on weekends.** Longer office hours may be more convenient for you.

- **Find out what happens when the doctor is on vacation.** Ask if there are other doctors who can see you if your doctor is away.

- **Check to see if the doctor's office is easy to get to.** Find out if you can take public transportation. If you drive, ask about parking.

- **Ask if you can use e-mail to contact the doctor.** This can be a quick and easy way for you to ask questions or share any concerns.

Research the doctor's background and training

- **Learn as much as you can about the doctor's background and training.** A good place to go for information is the Massachusetts Board of Registration in Medicine's website at www.massmedboard.org.

- **Check quality and care reports.** More information is now available on doctors' quality and care ratings. An excellent source is the Massachusetts Health Quality Partners website at www.mhqp.org.

Call the doctors' offices that you think would be a good fit, and say you are interested in an initial visit. Use this appointment to ask questions and find out how well the doctor listens, and whether you feel at ease with him or her. Having a doctor you respect professionally and feel comfortable with personally is good for your health. So take the time to make the right choice.

Where to Learn More About Choosing the Right Doctor for You

Massachusetts Medical Society
www.massmed.org (click on "for patients")

American Medical Association
http://webapps.ama-assn.org/doctorfinder/home.html (click on "patients")

National Institute on Aging
www.niapublications.org/agepages/choose.asp

THE PARTNERSHIP FOR
HEALTHCARE EXCELLENCE

www.partnershipforhealthcare.org