# A Primer On Choosing A Primary Care Physician

*By: Maggie Downs*

**The importance of having a primary care physician** cannot be overstated. A primary care physician is a doctor who helps patients maintain their overall health and well-being, as well as coordinating a patient's care when specialists or other medical professionals are needed. Seeing patients at regular intervals and not just during times of illness, a primary care physician can also help a patient to establish and maintain healthy lifestyle goals. Family physicians, geriatricians and internists are all primary care physicians.

Getting to know a patient over time can have a profound effect on the health of that patient — understanding a person's family history, workplace situations and stress, age-related concerns and more. Establishing a long-term care relationship with a patient can help a primary care physician treat an acute problem or focus on a larger issue. Regular visits to one's primary care physician may also help expedite the diagnoses and treatment of high risk factors like high cholesterol or hypertension before a serious illness has had time to develop. In short, the primary care doctor is a patient's first line of defense for getting well and staying well.

**Eisenhower Primary Care Physicians in Rancho Mirage**

Recently, we asked three Eisenhower Primary Care physicians about their individual approaches to wellness, how they help patients navigate health care and why having a physician who knows you is an invaluable asset.

**Jennifer Sarayba, MD**

Board Certified in Family Medicine, Dr. Jennifer Sarayba says she was drawn to primary care for the spectrum of care she could provide.

"When you practice Family Medicine, it is exactly what it sounds like — you get to know all the members of a family," says Dr. Sarayba. "I've treated several generations within the same family. It's a very important job, because you get to know the family dynamics and how family members relate to one another. You become an integral part of their lives."

She recommends finding a primary care physician who shares your view of wellness.

"When you're looking for your primary care physician, find out if you have similar ideas of what optimum health should be. Make sure that you're approaching things from the same place. After all, this is a relationship," says Dr. Sarayba. "And you want to feel like your doctor is 100 percent on board with what you want."

**Glenn Jabola, MD**

As a Family Medicine specialist with a focus on dermatology, Dr. Glenn Jabola enjoys knowing a lot about a lot of things.

"You have to be good at almost everything, which is why I think this is one of the more challenging specialties in medicine," explains Dr. Jabola. "There's never a dull moment. My first patient of the day may have a sports injury, the next patient has geriatric needs, and my third patient may be there with dermatology concerns. As a primary care physician, I never know what each day will bring."

Dr. Jabola often thinks of the primary care physician as "the captain of the team." "Primary care doctors are the coordinators for your care. They make sure you see the right specialist, or get the right tests ordered, and they will follow up on your diagnoses and treatment," he says. "Everyone needs a good primary care physician — they're your health advocate."

**Sunnyline Vendiola, MD**

Dr. Sunnyline Vendiola believes the medical landscape has changed over time, along with the role of the health care provider.

"One way to start your search for finding the right doctor is to find out if she/he shares your belief system and approach to healing," says Dr. Vendiola.

In addition to her Board Certification in Family Medicine and practice of full spectrum Family Medicine, Dr. Vendiola also received special training and certification in holistic and integrative medicine. "Not all conditions and illnesses can be treated with prescription medicines and sometimes a more natural approach is preferred," says Dr. Vendiola. "Knowing the different modalities in integrative medicines gives me the additional knowledge and understanding to provide the best possible care and advice to my patients — whether they prefer traditional Western medicine or a more holistic approach."

## Tips for finding a primary care physician

Choosing a primary care physician can be daunting. The following tips may help you get just what the doctor ordered.

**Talk to your health insurance provider.** Most health insurance providers maintain a list of network physicians.

**Make some inquiries** — many patients receive personal referrals from their trusted relatives, friends and colleagues. Find someone you respect and ask for their advice and assistance.

**New in town?** Ask your current physician to help you find a primary care provider in your new neighborhood. Medical specialists can often recommend family medicine physicians.

**Find the right fit.** Visit a doctor to see if he or she will be the right fit for you. Treat it like a job interview and ask questions, take notes and spend some time making an evaluation of who would be the right choice.

**Long-term visitor?** Ask your health insurance provider about having a second primary care physician at your home away from home. Many plans include this option.

**To learn more about Eisenhower Primary Care, call 760-773-1460.**

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