

# Choosing Quality Health Care

Health Plans



Doctors



Treatments



Hospitals



Long-Term Care



Agency for Health Care Policy and Research

## Choosing Quality Health Care

Research shows that Americans want and value quality health care. The problem is that the quality of health care services varies in our country – a lot. For example, some health plans and doctors simply do a better job than others of helping you stay healthy and getting you better if you are ill.

Fortunately, health care quality can be measured, and it can be improved. You can find out how in a new guide developed by the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Agency for Health Care Policy and Research (AHCPR). *Your Guide to Choosing Quality Health Care* is based on research about the information people want and need when making decisions about health plans, doctors, treatments, hospitals, and long-term care.

The *Guide* describes quality measures including consumer ratings, clinical performance measures, and accreditation – what they are, where to find them, and how to use them. And it provides other information, such as the “Quick-Checks for Quality” that summarize the major ways you can check for quality health care.

This initiative is one part of HHS' efforts to address the findings of the President's Advisory Commission on Consumer Protection and Quality in the Health Care Industry.

# Quick-Checks for Quality ✓

## Look for a plan that:

- Has been rated highly by its members on the things that are important to you.
- Does a good job of helping people stay well and get better.
- Is accredited, if that is important to you.
- Has the doctors and hospitals you want or need.
- Provides the benefits you need.
- Provides services where and when you need them.
- Meets your budget.

## Look for a doctor who:

- Is rated to give quality care.
- Has the training and background that meet your needs.
- Takes steps to prevent illness—for example, talks to you about quitting smoking.
- Has privileges at the hospital of your choice.
- Is part of your health plan, unless you can afford to pay extra.
- Encourages you to ask questions.
- Listens to you.
- Explains things clearly.
- Treats you with respect.

## When choosing a treatment, make sure you understand:

- What your diagnosis is.
- Whether treatment is really needed at this time.
- What your treatment options are.
- Whether the treatment options are based on the latest scientific evidence.
- The benefits and risks of each treatment.
- The cost of each treatment.

## Look for a hospital that:

- Is accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations.
- Is rated highly by State or consumer or other groups.
- Is one where your doctor has privileges, if that is important to you.
- Is covered by your health plan.
- Has experience with your condition.
- Has had success with your condition.
- Checks and works to improve its own quality of care.

## Look for long-term care that:

- Has been found by State agencies, accreditors, or others to provide quality care.
- Has the services you need.
- Has staff that meet your needs.
- Meets your budget.



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