



PacifiCare Health Watch

Choosing Your Primary Care Physician

Remember, you
and your doctor
should be
partners in your
health, and to be
effective partners,
you should be as
comfortable as
possible with
him or her.

As a member of PacifiCare, you and each enrolled family member need to select a Primary Care Physician from the PacifiCare Directory of Participating or Contracting Medical Groups and Physicians. The Physician you select will provide or coordinate the provisions of your medical and hospital services.

Types of Primary Care Physicians (PCPs)

Not all physicians are considered PCPs. A PCP is generally one of the following kinds of doctors:

- Family/General Practitioners – Doctors who treat patients of all ages
- Internist – Doctors who treat adults and may have a subspecialty
- Pediatrician – Doctors who treat children
- Obstetrician/Gynecologist (OB/GYN) – Doctors who treat women (OB/GYNs are PCPs in selected Medical Groups and IPAs only)

Choosing Your Primary Care Physician

PacifiCare contracts with over 58,000 physicians, 18,000 of whom are Primary Care Physicians (PCPs). Chances are, a physician with whom you or a member of your family has a current relationship is part of our contracted network. To determine if your current physician is part of PacifiCare's network of participating or contracting physicians, simply look him or her up in the PacifiCare *Provider Directory*. Participating or contracting provider information can be obtained from many sources:

• **The PacifiCare HMO Provider Directory** – The PacifiCare *Provider Directory* has all the information you need to select a doctor and a participating or contracting Medical Group that is most convenient for you and each family member. Graphic symbols indicate enhanced provider services* (if used) such as Express Referrals^{SM**} and Ready ReplySM. The type of provider organization (Medical Group or IPA) and the specialists and hospitals affiliated with that group are also indicated in the Directory.

• **PacifiCare's Online Provider Directory** – The most current information source is the PacifiCare Web site, located at www.pacificare.com. You can access the online doctor directory for your specific geographic area and look for a PCP using a physician's name, county, city, zip code, or primary care specialty. To access the online directory:

1. Log on to the PacifiCare Web site.
2. Click on your home state.
3. Select Doctor Directory and determine your search criteria.

• **Customer Service Department** – Customer Service Associates are available to provide you with information about network providers, including geographical location, education and specialties. Customer Service Associates can also tell you if the doctor of your choice is accepting new patients. Assistance is available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

* Services vary by state.

** Available to Arizona, California and San Antonio, Texas Members only.

As you make your PCP selection, keep the following in mind:

- The physician-patient relationship is key to your health, because your PCP coordinates all your medical care: routine checkups, preventive services, referrals to specialist, and hospital visits. Your doctor knows your entire medical history and what is important to you. This knowledge can be crucial to your care should you become critically ill and may reduce the chances of complications.
- You and each of your family members must select a PCP. Every family member may select the same PCP or each family member may select a different PCP.
- Your PCP selection also determines which specialists and hospitals your benefit covers. Review these affiliations in the Directory as you make your PCP selection(s).
- Consider office locations, training, education or if you would prefer a male or female doctor, and/or one who speaks the same language you do, or one who is open and accepting of your culture or lifestyle.
- Your PCP should be located within a 30-mile radius of your home or workplace.

What Happens If You Do Not Select a PCP?

If you do not select a physician at enrollment and list him or her on your enrollment application, PacifiCare will select one for you and each of your enrolled family members based on the nearest location to your home address. This automatic PCP selection will appear on your member ID card.

If you want to change the PCP that was selected for you, call PacifiCare Customer Service prior to the 15th* of the month. If you call by the 15th* of the month, you will become effective with your newly selected PCP on the first of the upcoming month. If you call after the 15th of the month, the change will be effective the first day of the following month.

We highly recommend that you make the initial selection yourself.

Changing Participating or Contracting Medical Groups or Primary Care Physicians

You have the ability to change PCPs as often as once a month. If you were assigned a PCP because you did not select one on your enrollment form, or if you decide to change for another reason, you may change your Participating or Contracting Medical Group or Primary Care Physician by simply calling PacifiCare's Customer Service department.

There may be many good reasons to change your PCP. Above all, you should be comfortable with the relationship you have with your doctor.

If you make a change to your PCP, remember:

- If your change request is received on or before the 15th* of the month, PacifiCare will change your Participating or Contracting Medical Group or Primary Care Physician effective the first day of the following month.
- If PacifiCare receives your change request after the 15th* of the month, the change will be effective the first day of the second month following the request to change a Participating or Contracting Medical Group or Primary Care Physician.

* Deadline may vary by region. Please call Customer Service to confirm.

Questions?

Call the

Customer Service

department

toll-free at

1-800-531-3341.