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Don't wait until you get the flu to find a primary care physician



Flu season is just around the corner, bringing aches, pains, fevers, headaches, coughs, sore throats, nasal congestion and all the weariness that goes with them. According to the Ohio Department of Health, about 200,000 Americans are hospitalized by the flu each year. Many more simply suffer with it at home, missing work, school, get-togethers with family and friends, and even major holidays.

While there's no foolproof way to avoid getting the flu, there's a proven way to stay healthier. The best defense against the flu — and many other illnesses — is to build a relationship with a primary care physician.

People who regularly see a primary care physician often live healthier lives. According to a study by the University of Pennsylvania, adding just one primary care physician to a population of 10,000 people improves health outcomes for people with a wide variety of conditions — including cancer, heart disease, stroke — while increasing life expectancy and self-rated health.

Routine check-ups allow your doctor to take a proactive approach that can sometimes prevent you from getting the flu or other illnesses. You gain a “partner in health.”

One major benefit of this kind of relationship is that you'll be more likely to discover health concerns before you have obvious symptoms, when they're easier and less expensive to treat. That's partly because your doctor will recommend routine screenings based on your personal and family health history at the ideal times.

Just as important, however, is that your physician will get to know you. Having someone you trust with your health will make you more comfortable sharing information that could affect your well-being. In addition, a doctor who sees you regularly is more likely to notice changes that could be red flags for health risks, sometimes before you're aware of them yourself.

Even when you do get sick, you probably won't suffer as much. Your established relationship with your primary care doctor's office will help you get treated faster. Unlike visits to a clinic or doctor you've never seen before, you won't have to spend time explaining your medical history or answering other questions because your physician already knows your background. That familiarity will help your doctor make a better diagnosis, because he or she will take into account any allergies, conditions, or other medical history you have.

Another advantage is that your physician can serve as a gateway to the larger medical system if you need to see a specialist. They'll be able to refer you to the right people, and can bring specialists up to speed quickly by providing your full medical history.

When choosing a primary care physician, look for doctors with high satisfaction scores who are associated with preferred hospital networks. Ideally, you should choose a doctor who is close to your home or your workplace, depending on the time of day you think you'll be most likely to schedule visits. It's also important to select a doctor you feel comfortable working with, so look for someone with whom you think you can develop a good rapport.

Another factor to consider is the type of training your doctor has. In the United States, a Doctor of Medicine, or “MD,” has the traditional western education required to practice medicine and surgery. A “DO,” or Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine, is considered professionally equivalent to an MD, but also has additional training in the manipulation of joints and bones. Both types are fully-qualified doctors with scientifically-validated training.

Want to find a primary care physician today? Call The Christ Hospital Physicians – Primary Care at 513-585-1000.