

Health Insights

March 2025

Establishing a Primary Care Physician

You've probably heard the term "primary care", but many of us don't really know what that means. Primary care covers prevention, wellness, chronic condition management, and treatment for a variety of health concerns, whether physical, behavioral, or social. A primary care physician looks at the complete picture of health and considers the patient's family background and health history.

Think of a primary care provider as a "general practitioner," or your personal doctor. They provide everyday health care and act as a "home base" for your overall wellness. Your provider can help you manage chronic conditions like high blood pressure or diabetes. Primary care providers also give referrals to specialists when you need additional medical expertise to treat a specific condition.

Who provides primary care?

Primary care has five main types of providers patients can see for a variety of health topics.

- **Family medicine:** Providers in this field can care for your whole family and see patients of any age, including newborns. They also provide reproductive healthcare, including prenatal care.
- **Internal medicine:** These doctors, commonly known as internists, provide primary care for adults or older youth.
- **Pediatrics:** Pediatricians provide care for newborns through adolescents.
- **Obstetrics and gynecology (OB-GYN):** Providers in this field provide care for women at every stage of life. They specialize in reproductive health and offer family planning services.
- **Family nurse practitioners (FNP) and physician assistants (PA):** These providers care for people of all ages. They undergo extensive education and training programs that equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to diagnose and treat common illnesses and injuries.

Why is primary care important to your health?

Primary care helps you stay well by preventing issues from getting worse. Regular visits allow your primary care provider to get to know you and address any changes in your health. Routine screenings and tests can help detect an underlying health concern or prevent diseases. Often, identifying problems early makes them easier to treat. Your primary care provider can help you stay up to date on vaccines or screenings (mammograms, cervical cancer screenings, colon cancer screenings and more). These simple things can help you avoid major surgeries, medications, and/or hospitalizations for life-threatening problems.

What is included in primary care?

Providers can answer questions or concerns on any health topic. They are trained to administer exams, offer vaccinations, prescribe medications and address changes in your health. They can also order tests, X-rays, scans, or other imaging to help reach a diagnosis.

If you have an emotional or mental concern, you can and should talk to your primary care provider. Their goal is to help with things that can hinder your overall well-being, including mental health challenges like stress and depression.

UC Davis Health. (2023, June 29). What is primary care? learn why you should partner with a provider for your health. Cultivating Health. health.ucdavis.edu/blog/cultivating-health/what-is-primary-care-learn-why-you-should-partner-with-a-provider-for-your-health/2023/06.

Mental Health Moment

Choosing a Physician

The doctor-patient relationship is critical. Your primary care provider is generally responsible for advising and educating you about your health care decisions, as well as examining and treating you. You also want to find someone you can trust and talk openly with about your health.

- **Decide what kind of doctor fits your needs.** Assess your health care needs to understand what kind of doctor (e.g., family practice physician, general practitioner or internal medicine physician) will be the best fit.
- **Check your insurance network.** Once you've found some doctors that can address your health care needs, check to see if any of the doctors are in your insurance network. Alternatively, you could also search the provider directory on your insurance company's website to find doctors near you.
- **Check doctors' locations and hours.** You will be more likely to get the health care you need if the provider is close to your home or workplace and available at times when you'd be able to go.
- **Ask for referrals.** Family, friends, and co-workers can share their experiences to help you gauge whether their respective providers could be a good fit for you. You can also ask other health care professionals you're already working with who they'd recommend.
- **Do your research.** It's always good to check credible sources for information about health care providers. At a minimum, your primary care provider should hold the appropriate licensing and board certifications in the areas of medicine they practice.
- **Connect with office staff.** Staff can answer logistical questions about office hours, average wait times for appointments, after-hours care, on-call services, online patient portals, and telemedicine offerings. You may also get an informative first impression from talking with clinic staff.
- **Schedule an appointment.** Once you have chosen a provider, schedule an appointment to review your medical history and any health concerns.

It may take some time, but it's worth carefully assessing and selecting the right primary care provider for your health care needs. When you feel comfortable with your doctor, you're more likely to keep up with preventive care and address any health concerns.

Self-Love

Self-love is a fundamental aspect of fostering a healthy and resilient mind. At its core, self-love involves cultivating a positive and compassionate relationship with oneself, knowing your value, embracing your strengths, and accepting your imperfections without criticism.

How Does Self-Love Impact Mental Health?

- **Boosts Self-Esteem:** Taking good care of yourself and embracing self-love can improve your self-esteem and self-worth, fostering a positive self-image and acceptance just as you are. Acknowledge and celebrate your wins!
- **Lowers Tension and Worry:** Allocating time for self-care activities can notably decrease levels of stress and anxiety. It allows you to disconnect from the chaos of daily life and focus on your own needs.
- **Boosts Resilience:** Loving yourself sets you up to bounce back stronger when life throws curveballs. When you love and care for yourself, you develop the strength and tools to help you recover from setbacks and approach difficulties with a more positive mindset.
- **Improves Relationships:** A good relationship with yourself can improve your connection with others. When you're comfortable in your own skin, you can authentically connect with those around you. This fosters stronger and more meaningful connections.
- **Encourages Positive Habits:** Engaging in self-love challenges promotes positive habits. Looking after yourself, setting boundaries, and staying present can boost your mental well-being.

Make self-love a priority in life. Set aside time for yourself each day, whether it's 5 minutes of solitude in the car for a breathing routine or a couple of hours to enjoy an activity you love. Regularly invest time in nurturing your relationship with yourself. You'll discover the profound impact it can have on your mental health and overall well-being.

Heyel, M. (n.d.). The self-love challenge and its impact on Mental Health. Acenda Integrated Health. acendahealth.org/the-self-love-challenge-and-its-impact-on-mental-health/#:~:text=Self%2Dlove%20is%20more%20than,accepting%20your%20imperfections%20without%20criticism.



Vegetable Curry

Ingredients:

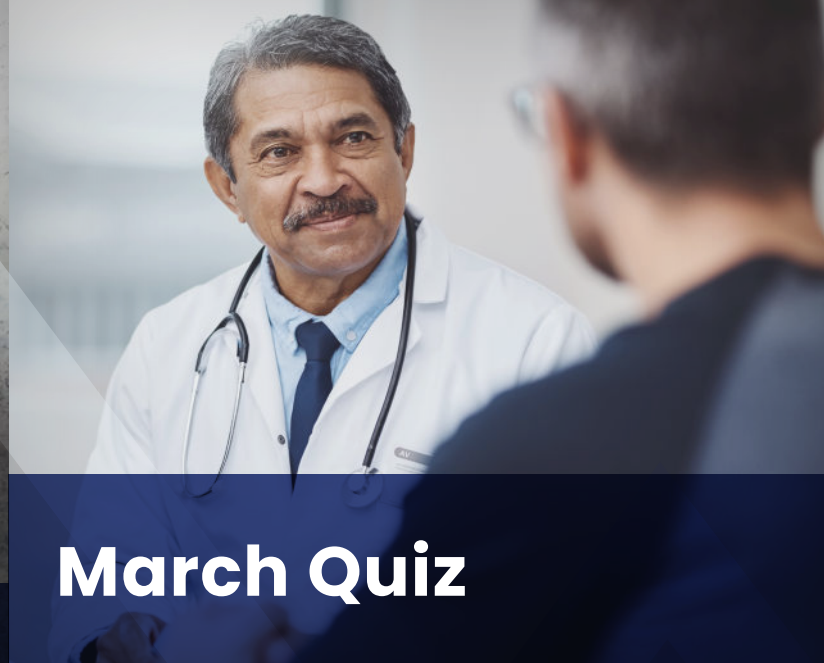
- 1 tbsp. oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, thinly sliced
- 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 (1") piece ginger, peeled, finely chopped
- 3 to 4 tbsp. Thai red curry paste, or 1 (4-oz. jar) Thai Kitchen red curry paste
- 2 (14.5-oz.) cans full-fat coconut milk
- 1 cup low-sodium vegetable broth
- 2 tsp. granulated sugar
- 1 medium carrot, sliced into coins (about 1 c.)
- 1 medium Yukon Gold potato, cut lengthwise into quarters, then sliced crosswise (about 1 c.)
- 1 small head broccoli, cut into florets
- 1 medium red bell pepper, seeds and ribs removed, cut into 1" pieces (about 1 c.)
- 3 oz. green beans, halved crosswise (about 1 c.)
- 3 tbsp. reduced-sodium soy sauce or fish sauce (optional)
- Cooked rice (preferably jasmine)
- Fresh cilantro, for serving

Directions:

1. In a large pot over medium heat, heat oil. Add onion, garlic, and ginger. Cook, stirring frequently, until aromatic, about 3 minutes. Add curry paste and stir until broken up and evenly distributed. Add milk, broth, and sugar and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Add carrots and potatoes, then reduce heat to low and simmer, stirring occasionally, until slightly thickened and flavors have melded, about 15 minutes.
2. Add broccoli, bell pepper, and green beans and cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are tender, about 5 minutes more. Stir in soy sauce (if using).
3. Divide rice among bowls. Spoon curry over. Top with cilantro.

Calories: 577, Fat: 49 g, Carbs: 28 g, Protein: 11 g

Ramero, G. (2024, August 5). Best vegetable curry recipe - how to make vegetable curry. Vegetable Curry. www.delish.com/cooking/recipe-ideas/a60078759/vegetable-curry-recipe/.



March Quiz

Establishing a Primary Care Physician

1. Which of the following providers can provide primary care?
 - a. Psychologist
 - b. Social Worker
 - c. Physician Assistant

2. What type of care can primary care physicians provide?

Choosing a Physician

3. When you feel comfortable asking questions and trust the doctor, you're more likely to keep up with _____ and address any health _____.
4. Who is *not* a good person to ask for a primary care provider referral from?
 - a. Family
 - b. Stranger
 - c. Co-worker

Mental Health Moment

5. List one reason why is it important to practice self-love?

See page 5 for quiz answers.

Healthy Habits Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 Start the Read Everyday Challenge .
2 Self-Care Sunday: Take 5 minutes to yourself.	3	4 Tasty Tuesday: Try out a new recipe.	5	6 Thankful Thursday: Write down 5 things that make you happy.	7	8 Selfless Saturday: Go through your closet and donate gently used items.
9	10 Motivation Monday: Set a goal to exercise this week.	11	12 Wellness Wednesday: Check your medical carrier's website for in-network providers.	13	14 Family Friday: Spend time with loved ones.	15
16	17	18 Team Player Tuesday: Ask a co-worker if they need any help with a project.	19	20 Challenge Check-in: How many pages do you have left in your book?	21	22 Social Saturday: Try out a local restaurant with friends.
23 Sunday Reset: Take 10 minutes to tidy up before bed.	24 Meaningful Monday: Set positive intentions for the week.	25	26	27 Thriving Thursday: Schedule a preventive care visit.	28	29 Spring into Spring: Plant some wildflowers in your garden.
30	31 Challenge Check-In: What was your favorite read?					

WELLNESS CHALLENGE

Read Everyday



This month, try to read at least 15 minutes a day. Dig out a book you've been meaning to finish or take a recommendation from a friend for a new book to start. Benefits of daily reading include:

- Reduced stress and depressive symptoms
- Slowed progress of dementia and Alzheimer's disease
- Improved focus and concentration
- Increased empathy
- Lowered blood pressure and heart rate
- Improved sleep quality

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4
DAY 1	Book _____ Minutes _____	Book _____ Minutes _____	Book _____ Minutes _____	Book _____ Minutes _____
DAY 2	Book _____ Minutes _____	Book _____ Minutes _____	Book _____ Minutes _____	Book _____ Minutes _____
DAY 3	Book _____ Minutes _____	Book _____ Minutes _____	Book _____ Minutes _____	Book _____ Minutes _____
DAY 4	Book _____ Minutes _____	Book _____ Minutes _____	Book _____ Minutes _____	Book _____ Minutes _____
DAY 5	Book _____ Minutes _____	Book _____ Minutes _____	Book _____ Minutes _____	Book _____ Minutes _____
DAY 6	Book _____ Minutes _____	Book _____ Minutes _____	Book _____ Minutes _____	Book _____ Minutes _____
DAY 7	Book _____ Minutes _____	Book _____ Minutes _____	Book _____ Minutes _____	Book _____ Minutes _____

Answers to Quiz:

Q1: c. Physician Assistant

Q2: Annual exams and screenings, vaccinations, order tests, x-rays, scans, and more

Q3: preventive care, concerns

Q4: b. Stranger

Q5: It can boost self-esteem, lower stress, boost resilience, improve relationships, and encourage positive habits.