

Your physician has volunteered to participate in an Accountable Care Organization (ACO) called the **Frederick Integrated Healthcare Network**. An ACO is a group of doctors, hospitals, and other providers who remain independent while working together to provide better coordinated care and invest in resources to help patients and families to stay healthy. Patients who utilize ACO participating physicians should receive better care over time.

ACO providers are able to coordinate care more effectively due to shared data about their patients that improves communication, reduces duplication of services and cost to you, and helps to identify gaps in care to improve the overall quality of the care you receive. You will be asked if you want Medicare to share your health data with your physician. This data helps your physician to understand your overall experience of care, including tests and treatment results and work with other team members to improve the care provided. You may additionally receive customer satisfaction surveys. For general questions or additional information about Accountable Care Organizations, please visit [www.medicare.gov/acos.html](http://www.medicare.gov/acos.html) or call **1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227)**. TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048. You may also contact your physician or the ACO at 1-800-772-3951 between 8:00 A.M. and 4:30 P.M. Monday through Friday.

We hope that this newsletter will provide a few resources to help you stay well.

## What is a Care Manager?

Your Primary Care Physician (PCP) may recommend a care manager to assist you with your plan of care. Many of us leave our physician office or are discharged from the hospital and with unanswered questions and fears. With new medications we wonder if health changes we are experiencing are expected or whether we should contact our physician. A care manager is an experienced health coach who makes follow-up contact with you between visits to your physician to answer questions, monitor changes and discuss warning signs and risk factors. The care manager provides education about diet and activity that supports your medical condition. A care manager can help schedule appointments, obtain transportation and affordable medications and locate community resources. Care managers are advocates who break down barriers to care and work with your PCP to improve your health status. If your PCP recommends a care manager to you or a care manager contacts you after discharge from a health care facility, please consider the benefits of having this health advocate working with your primary care team.

## Medicare Benefits for Regular Medical Checkups

Medicare covers important exams such as the Welcome to Medicare Visit and Yearly Wellness Visit that focus on your family medical history, current medical condition and screening tests needed to diagnose conditions early, while they are most treatable. You pay nothing for these visits if the provider you use accepts Medicare assignment. These regular visits provide your PCP with an important update on your health status so that if problems arise the team has a clear picture of your health history and understands your lifestyle so that a plan of care meeting your needs can be developed. It is your opportunity to engage with the health care team and together develop a plan of care with your health goals in mind.

## Maryland 211— Get Connected. Get Answers.

When you need help but don't know where to start, **Dial 211**. Free, confidential help is available 24 hours per day, seven days per week. Translation services are available in more than 150 languages. 211 is a link to resources right here in your community.

Maryland 211 can help with a variety of issues, including:

- Adopting your home environment due to disability
- Assistance with chores or meal preparation
- Paying for prescriptions or obtaining transportation to medical appointments
- Feeling alone and need someone to listen

Visit us online at [211md.org](http://211md.org) or call **1-866-411-6803**.

## The Importance of Having a Primary Care Physician

A primary care physician (PCP) is a physician trained in the care of the whole individual. A PCP focuses on your comprehensive health and wellness and coordinates care of specialists when necessary. Patients with a PCP have better management of chronic diseases, lower overall health care costs, and a higher level of satisfaction with their care. The health care team at your PCP's office can detect changes in your health status over time and recommend a plan of care to prevent future complications requiring expensive specialty care. A PCP can act on behalf of the patient to collaborate with specialists, act as a repository for medical records, and provide long-term management of chronic conditions. Continuity in primary care is particularly important if you have a medical condition that encompasses multiple organ systems and requires long term treatment and monitoring, such as diabetes, pulmonary disease, and hypertension.



Regularly visiting a PCP helps you to look out for your health and well-being—not just for today, but also for the future. If you need a PCP, please contact the ACO at 1-800-772-3951 and we will provide you with a list of area physicians who are accepting new Medicare patients.

### How to Prepare for Your Primary Care Physician Appointment

To get the most of your primary care physician (PCP) visit, be prepared. Think about what you want to tell your PCP, including medical and surgical history, current prescription and over the counter medications, home and family situation, values, religion, beliefs, and end of life wishes. Feel free to bring a family member or a friend with you to help you record what is discussed. You are always welcome to ask for a translator, too.

Think about your needs ahead of time and come prepared, since appointment slots are often 10-20 minutes in length. Bring important information, including:

- ***Prior medical records***
- ***Test results***
- ***Contact information for other doctors***
- ***Medication list, including dose and frequency, or medications in original bottles including herbal supplements***

Prioritize your questions or concerns and write them down. List significant issues you want to discuss, such as chronic medical

problems, medications, test results, concerns about health, and a timeline for your routine screenings. Describe symptoms you are experiencing. Ask questions if you don't understand the meaning of a word, medical instructions, or you don't know why you need a certain test. It is important to answer your PCP's questions honestly. Take notes and repeat back what you understand to ensure mutual agreement. Ask for written instructions and contact information for follow up questions. How can you contact the provider outside of regular visits or after hours for urgent needs?

Make the most of your visit to enable your PCP to provide you with the best possible care.

Our mission is to provide you with support toward living a healthier life and the tools and resources to make well-informed decisions about your healthcare. The physicians of the Frederick Integrated Healthcare Network wish you a happy and healthy New Year.