

Your first appointment

Easy · 10 min to call; an hour or so for the visit · Preventive visits often \$0 in network; late or missed visits can mean a fee

When you call, say you're a new patient, give your insurance plan, say why you want to come in, and ask what to bring. New-patient appointments can take a few weeks. Arrive early with your card, photo ID, medicine list and written questions, and don't leave until you know what happens next.

YOU'LL NEED

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| ☐ Your insurance card (or Medicaid/CHIP information) | ☐ Your family health history, if you know it |
| ☐ Photo ID | ☐ Your questions, written down |
| ☐ A list of your medicines, or the bottles | ☐ Your calendar |

WHAT TO KNOW

- 1 Find someone in network first.
- 2 Have your card in hand when you call.
- 3 Say you're a new patient and why you're calling.
- 4 Give your plan's name and confirm which providers in the office are in your network.
- 5 Name the provider you'd like, and be flexible if you're sick.
- 6 Ask for what you need.
- 7 Ask three more things: can they send forms ahead, what should you bring, and what's the cancellation policy?
- 8 Expect a wait.
- 9 Arrive early and check in.
- 10 Share the full picture.
- 11 Don't leave confused.

Watch out Most health plans won't pay late, no-show or late-cancellation fees, so you'd owe them yourself. Put the appointment in your phone with a reminder the day before.

DAD NOTE Write your questions down before you go. Everyone forgets them the minute the doctor walks in.

Full lesson: aptkeys.com/body/finding-a-doctor/your-first-appointment/

Checked October 3, 2026. Sources: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services; Health Resources and Services Administration; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.