

Steps to choosing a hospital

STEP 1: Learn about the care you need and your hospital choices

Talk to your doctors or health care providers:

- Find out which hospitals they work with.
- Ask which hospitals they think give the best care for your condition (for example, have enough staffing, coordinate care, promote medication safety, and prevent infection).
- Ask how well these hospitals check and improve their quality of care.
- Ask if the hospitals participate in Medicare or in the network of your Medicare Advantage Plan (like an HMO or PPO) or other Medicare health plan, if you have one.

Based on your condition, ask your doctors or health care providers:

- If you should consider a specialty hospital, teaching hospital (usually part of a university), community hospital, or one that does research or has clinical trials related to your condition?
- If you need a surgeon or other type of specialist, what's their experience and success treating your condition?
- Who will be responsible for your overall care while you're in the hospital?
- Will you need care after leaving the hospital and, if so, what kind of care? Who will arrange this care?
- Are there any alternatives to hospital care?

STEP 2: Think about your personal and financial needs

Check your hospital insurance coverage:

- Do you need permission from your Medicare health plan (like a preauthorization or a referral) before you're admitted for hospital care?
- If you need care that's not emergency care, do you have to use only the network of your Medicare health plan? Do you have to use certain hospitals or see certain surgeons or specialists?
- Do you have to pay more to use a hospital (surgeon or specialist) that doesn't participate in your Medicare health plan, if you have one?
- Do you need to meet certain requirements to get care after you leave the hospital?

Think about your preferences:

- Do you want a hospital located near family members or friends?
- Does the hospital have convenient visiting hours and other rules that are important to you (for example, can a relative or someone helping with your care stay overnight in the room with you)?

STEP 3: Find and compare hospitals based on your condition and needs

Visit [Medicare.gov](https://www.Medicare.gov) to:

- Find hospitals by name, city, state, or ZIP code.
- Check the results of patient surveys (what patients said about their hospital experience).
- Compare the results of certain measures of quality that show how well these hospitals treat patients with certain conditions.

Search online for other sources to compare the quality of the hospitals you're considering. Some states have laws that require hospitals to report data about the quality and cost of their care and post the data online.

STEP 4: Discuss your hospital options, and choose a hospital

- Talk with family members or friends about the hospitals you're comparing.
- Talk to your doctor or health care provider about how the hospital information you gathered applies to you.
- Considering all the above factors, choose the hospital that's best for you.

