

Steps to Choosing a Hospital Checklist

STEP 1: Learn about the care you need and your hospital choices.	
✓	Talk to your doctor/health care provider about the following:
	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. See page 16.
✓	Based on your condition, ask your doctor/health care provider questions such as:
	Which hospitals have the best experience with your condition?
	Should you 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 is his or her 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?

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STEP 2: Think about your personal and financial needs.	
✓	Check your hospital insurance coverage:
	Do you need permission from your health plan (like a pre-authorization or a referral) before you're admitted for hospital care?
	If you need care that's not emergency care, do you have to use certain hospitals? Do you have to see certain surgeons or specialists?
	Do you have to pay more to use a hospital (surgeon or specialist) that doesn't participate in your plan?
	Do you need to meet certain requirements to get care after you leave the hospital?
	If you don't have insurance, call the hospital before you're admitted, and ask to speak to someone about setting up a payment plan or other resources to help with payment.
✓	Think about your preferences:
	Do you want a hospital 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?

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

Use the **Hospital Compare** Web tool at www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov to do the following and more:

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

See Section 2 for a closer look at hospital quality and the Hospital Compare Web tool. You can also call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.

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 how the hospital information you gathered applies to you.

Choose the hospital that's best for you.

Hospital Quality Quick Check

Here's a quick summary of what to look for when comparing hospitals:

✓	Look for a Hospital that:
	Has the best experience with your condition.
	Checks and improves the quality of its care.
	Performs well on measures of quality, including a national patient survey, that are published on the Hospital Compare Web tool. Visit www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov .
	Participates in Medicare.
	Meets your needs in terms of location and other factors, like visiting hours.
	Is covered by your health plan.