

Understanding the referral process



Your primary care physician is your health partner

BCN believes that a member-centered approach to care provides you with the most effective care. As your health care partner, your primary care physician is responsible for the care you receive — from basic health services to treatment for illness. Whether your primary care physician provides or coordinates your care, involving your doctor at the start means that you have a knowledgeable professional focusing on you and your total health care.

Getting care

Because primary care physicians are specially trained to provide comprehensive care, they can provide many services in their offices. Your primary care physician also arranges for any additional care you may need — in partnership with you and in coordination with BCN. When you need to see a specialist or have special tests, your primary care physician refers you to a physician in the network.

Extensive network of specialists

Our network includes thousands of specialists. More than likely, your doctor will refer you to a specialist that he or she knows professionally. Sometimes the specialist may even be part of the same group as your primary care physician. When your doctors practice in the same location and use the same hospital, it is easier for them to take care of you.

Once your doctor decides that your condition requires specialist care, he or she will refer you for that care for a specific treatment period. Your specialist will decide the services required and the number of visits for that treatment period.

Important points about getting specialist care

Your primary care physician manages your health care. This means that:

- Your primary care physician refers you to a specialist. The referral isn't always in paper form.
- Your primary care physician specifies the time, from 30 days to 365 days, during which the specialist can provide most visits and services. (Some services may require special approval.)
- Your specialist can't refer you to another specialist. Only your primary care physician can refer you to specialist care.
- If your primary care physician doesn't refer you, you are responsible for the charges.
- Changing your primary care physician while a specialist is treating you may change your treatment authorization. Check with your new primary care physician.

Questions?

If you or your primary care physician have questions about the referral process, call Customer Service using the number on the back of your ID card. Representatives are available between 8 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

