



Understanding the **referral process**

Care begins with your primary care physician

To get the most from your Blue Care Network coverage, call on your primary care physician first. As your health care partner, your primary care physician is responsible for most of 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.

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. When you need to see a specialist or have special tests, your primary care physician will refer 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.

Going to a specialist

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

Important points about referral care

Whatever specialist you see, your primary care physician is managing your health care through a referral process. This means that:

- You must have a referral from your primary care physician to see a specialist.
- The referral may cover a period of time, from 30 days to 365 days, during which time the specialist can provide most visits and services. (Some services must meet certain criteria and may require special approval.)
- Your specialist can't refer you to another specialist without an additional referral from your primary care physician.
- Without a referral authorizing specialty care, you are responsible for the charges.
- If you change your primary care physician while a specialist is treating you, your new primary care physician must reauthorize the treatment you are receiving. Your treatment may not be covered until that occurs.

Questions?

If you or your primary care physician have questions about the referral process, call Customer Service at 800-662-6667 between 8 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. TTY users can call 800-257-9980.