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Know Your Choices

PROFILES OF AREA MEDICAL PROVIDERS

While selecting a medical provider can be daunting, careful consideration is crucial, as the decision directly impacts your health care treatments and overall quality of life. Fortunately, the internet has eased this process, offering online reviews and first-hand accounts that provide valuable insights into what potential patients can expect from a particular provider.

In fact, according to Reputation, a business-to-business online reputation management and customer experience management company, 70% of consumers rely on patient reviews when selecting a health care location or provider.

The company's 2022 Healthcare Trends Report, which was conducted in partnership with the international market research firm YouGov, also revealed that 72 percent of consumers will only choose a doctor with 4- or 5-star ratings.

On top of this, the number of reviews plays a large role in many consumers' health care decisions, with 80% of respondents saying that at least five positive reviews are needed to prove a health care provider is trustworthy. 64% of responders noted that they believed health care providers should actively and public respond to patient reviews, as well.

"For decades, patients had incredibly close relationships with their doctors and for many, this bond spanned years and even generations. The days of brand loyalty are gone, especially as the pandemic continues, and we continue to see rapid change in care delivery models as well as consumer expectations," Annie Hafner Haarmann, Head of Strategy and Consulting, Healthcare and Life Sciences at Reputation, said in the press release. "This is the same shift we have seen in other industries, where it's become common to read reviews before buying a new product or review a restaurant's menu before making a reservation. Healthcare consumers are using this information to make decisions about the services and providers that are the right fit for them."

Tips for choosing a doctor

Like the survey respondents, the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (ODPHP) says that finding a health care provider you can trust is essential. This is because your doctor will be who you turn to for preventative services, physical and mental health treatments, and referrals to other health specialists.

As a result, to ensure you and your provider can truly work together to better your health, ODPHP emphasizes looking for a doctor that treats you with respect, values your opinions and concerns, and fosters a collaborative partnership in which you are encouraged to ask any questions you may have. It's also important that your doctor strives to explain complicated health terms in a way that you can easily understand.

In addition to reading online reviews, ODPHP

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Choosing a Medical Provider



DR. KATE PHILLIPS



UT Family Physicians Hardin Valley
865-694-9349
UTMedicalCenter.org



Feeling at Home in a Doctor's Office

Conveniently located at UT Family Physicians in Hardin Valley, Kate Phillips, DO, is one of the excellent providers you'll find as part of the Primary Care Collaborative of UT Medical Center. With a clinical focus on preventative care, women's health and in-office procedures, Dr. Phillips feels honored to provide high-quality care for her patients in a safe and welcoming environment.

Dr. Phillips earned her medical degree from the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine in Blacksburg, Virginia, completed her residency in Family Medicine at UT Medical Center in Knoxville and is board-certified by the American Board of Family Medicine. Originally from Georgia, Dr. Phillips fell in love with the Knoxville area when she moved here in 2019, and now lives on a farm with her husband and two children.

Dr. Phillips would be pleased to introduce you to the personalized care and outstanding service provided at UT Family Physicians in Hardin Valley.

DR. JEFFREY J. EBERTING

DMD, MS



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Dr. Eberting has been a dentist for over 25 years, with more than 20 of those years in orthodontics. He chose dentistry, and then the orthodontic specialty, following a great experience with his own orthodontist. The positive changes in his life, as a result of treatment, inspired him to help others achieve the same lasting improvement in their self-esteem.

Receiving his Bachelor of Arts in History, Duke University, Doctorate of Dental Medicine (DMD), Kornberg School of Dentistry at Temple University, Advanced Education in General Dentistry (AEGD) Residency, U.S. Navy Dental Corps, Master of Science (MS) in Oral Biology and Certificate in Orthodontics, Kornberg School of Dentistry at Temple University, Dr. Eberting is also a Board-Certified Orthodontist and a Diplomate of the American Board of Orthodontics.

Since completing his Orthodontics residency and training, Dr. Eberting has constantly sought to further his knowledge of the specialty. In broadening the services he offers to patients, he ensures each receives the high-quality experience and results they deserve.

HEATHER WHITEMORE

FNP-BC, MEP-C/Owner



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Heather is a Board-Certified Family Nurse Practitioner and a Certified Medical Esthetics Provider, has a Master's and Bachelor's degree in Nursing, has a Bachelor's degree in Psychology with independent studies in behavior modification, a Bachelor's degree in English with a certification in Technical Writing and Communication, and has a diploma in Nutritional Counseling and Weight Loss. She has been an advanced aesthetics provider for almost eleven years. Heather is a member of the Obesity Medicine Association and the Obesity Action Coalition, because she feels it is important to advocate for her patients and the recognition of obesity as a chronic disease. She is a member of the American Association of Aesthetic Medicine and continues to educate herself and others on the safety and technique of aesthetic procedures. When she is not working, she is spending time with her family, traveling, cooking, and gardening. She is the owner and lead Nurse Practitioner at Be Well and is excited to help patients achieve their weight loss, aesthetic, and overall health goals. Heather believes in building strong provider-patient relationships through honesty, integrity, and trust. Partnering with her patients on their personal journeys to wellness is fulfilling and rewarding. Each day she and her staff get to help someone gain back their self-confidence, accomplish a goal, and give life longevity to patients. Every day she leaves work knowing she has been a positive influence in someone's life. She has been helping others become healthy for over 17 years and looks forward to helping you.

DR. ANDREW WILLS

Knoxville Native Provides Excellent Primary Care



UT Family Physicians Hardin Valley
865-694-9349
UTMedicalCenter.org



If you are searching for a new Primary Care Physician for yourself or a family member, look for your medical care conveniently located at UT Family Physicians Hardin Valley. With a clinical focus on preventive medicine, pediatric care and women's health, Andrew B. Wills, DO, is one of the excellent providers you'll find as part of the Primary Care Collaborative of UT Medical Center.

Dr. Wills, a Knoxville native, studied Biomedical Engineering at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. After completing his undergraduate degree, he worked for the American Red Cross in Southern California. He completed medical school at the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine in Blacksburg, Virginia and returned to UT Medical Center in Knoxville for his residency in Family Medicine.

Dr. Wills is proud to serve the community of Knoxville and surrounding areas by personalized care and outstanding service.

Preventive Care Guidelines for women 40 and older



It may seem like adolescence is the time in a woman's life when most of the biological changes she will experience take place. After all, puberty brings with it hormone fluctuations that can affect both physical and emotional health in various ways. However, as a woman enters mid-life and beyond, she may notice that she has to reevaluate her lifestyle to accommodate the evolution of her body and health.

Preventive health screenings and additional strategies can keep women fit and well as they reach age 40 and beyond.

Annual mammograms

Most doctors now recommend that women get annual mammograms starting at age 40. Mammograms can detect breast cancer early on at its most treatable stage. Manual breast exams conducted at home and by a doctor also can be vital tools.

Colorectal cancer screenings

A colonoscopy is recommended for all women between the ages of 45 and 50 (on the earlier side of that spectrum for African American women). This test can reveal the presence of polyps and cancerous growths.

Vision

Annual eye exams should be a part of everyone's vision care strategy. The American Optometric Association says that, between ages 41 and 60, people may notice differences in their vision. Some changes may happen more frequently, requiring new prescription eyeglasses. Therefore, it helps to visit an eye care professional to take corrective steps. It's also important to note that, as one ages, the vitreous (clear jelly) in the eye can thicken, leading to increased floaters and flashes that should be checked by an ophthalmologist, as they may lead to retinal tears or detachment that can threaten vision.

Cholesterol screening

Heart disease is the leading cause of death among women, says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Cholesterol screening and other cardiovascular screenings can detect the presence of heart disease or indicate a person's risk for it. Annual physical exams likely will include cholesterol checks as well as tests investigating other lipids in the blood.

Vitamin D check

Deficiency in vitamin D is a recognized pandemic. People are not naturally producing enough vitamin D from sun exposure, nor absorbing enough from the foods they eat. Vitamin D deficiency can be a serious concern in adult women, particularly those above the age of 40. Vitamin D deficiency can adversely affect mood, and an article published in 2018 in the *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care* found vitamin D determines the pattern of post-menopausal bone loss and age-related osteoporosis. Verywell Health also says vitamin D is an important nutrient for preventing diabetes, cancer and age-related weight gain.

Routine gynecological screening and Pap/HPV testing

The American College of Obstetrics and Gynecologists say that it is important to visit a gynecologist annually for a woman's health checkup. New guidelines emerged some time ago that indicate it is not necessary to get a Pap test at each visit. The recent guidance indicates women between the ages of 30 and 65 can opt for both a Pap and HPV test every five years; have a Pap test alone every three years; or only get the HPV test every five years. After age 65, cervical cancer screenings can cease if there has never been an indication suggesting the presence of abnormal cervical cells.

Moving into middle age brings about changes. Women should evolve health care plans accordingly to stay as healthy as possible.

The effects of chronic stress on overall health

Stress poses a significant public health problem. Though work is often cited as a primary cause of stress, in 2022 socioeconomic issues contributed to a spike in stress levels, which serves as proof that there's no shortage of potential stressors.

According to the Stress in America Survey 2022 from the American Psychological Association, 81 percent of respondents indicated they were stressed out due to issues affecting the supply chain. Inflation proved even more troubling, as 87 percent of participants in the survey indicated they were stressed out by the rising cost in living. That's especially noteworthy, as it marked a nearly 30 percent increase from the year prior.

Stress is more than an inconvenience. Though the APA notes the human body is well-equipped to handle stress in small doses, chronic stress poses an entirely different problem, affecting various parts of the body.

Musculoskeletal system

The APA reports that muscle tension is almost a reflex reaction to stress. However, muscle tension for long periods of time can trigger a host of problems, including tension-type headache and migraine headaches, which are each associated with chronic muscle tension in the shoulders, neck and head. The APA notes that work-related stress in particular has been linked to musculoskeletal pain in the lower back and upper extremities.

Respiratory system

Stress can present problems affecting the respiratory system as well. Shortness of breath and rapid breathing can occur when a person is feeling stress. Though the APA acknowledges this is often not a problem for people without respiratory disease, the group notes it can exacerbate breathing problems for people with preexisting respiratory conditions, including asthma and COPD.

Cardiovascular system

Chronic stress can contribute to long-term problems affecting the heart and blood vessels, which the APA notes are the two elements of the cardiovascular system that work together to provide nourishment and oxygen to the body's organs. Chronic stress has many hallmarks, including a consistent and ongoing spike in heart rate. As a result, long-term ongoing stress increases a person's risk for an assortment of cardiovascular problems, including hypertension, heart attack and stroke.

Gastrointestinal system

The APA notes that hundreds of millions of neurons in the gut are in constant communication with the brain. This is why feelings of nervousness or anxiety often produce the sensation of butterflies in the stomach. When a person is dealing with chronic stress, that can affect communication between the gut and brain, potentially leading to pain, bloating and other discomfort in the gut.

Stress is a public health problem that affects people from all walks of life. Individuals feeling excess levels of stress are urged to speak to their physicians and visit [apa.org](https://www.apa.org) for more information.



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How to be a better health care consumer

Health care can be a difficult world to navigate. Health insurance plans often change just as individuals grow accustomed to them, prompting many people to wonder if there's anything they can do to gain a stronger grasp of the health care industry.

The American Institute of Preventive Medicine reports that Americans spend more time researching which cars and appliances to buy than they do health plans. Much of that is undoubtedly due to the belief that employers do much of the legwork in picking health care plans, leaving individuals with less responsibility and facing a relatively simple decision of picking the best employer-sponsored plan offered to them. But there's more than that to being a wise health care consumer, and individuals can embrace these strategies so they have a better understanding of their plans and coverage.

- **Attend information sessions.** Health insurance providers and employers typically schedule enrollment meetings whenever a plan is up for renewal and/or being changed. Such meetings can easily get lost in the hectic fray of modern business environments, but professionals should find the time to attend them. Enrollment meetings explain benefits in detail and provide a great opportunity to speak directly with an insurance provider without having to go through the often time-consuming customer service hotline.

- **Do your homework.** Prior to an enrollment meeting, ask for information about the plans an employer is offering, then go through those plans and jot down any questions you may have and ask them during the meeting. Un-

derstanding benefits is an essential trait of a wise health care consumer, so don't hesitate to ask questions about what is and isn't covered under each plan you're considering.

- **Avoid overemphasizing cost.** Cost is a big consideration for health care consumers. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, the average annual cost of health insurance in the United States is just under \$7,500 for an individual and more than \$21,000 for a family. Though it may be tempting to choose the least expensive plan you're offered, avoid overemphasizing cost, especially at the expense of coverage. Adequate coverage that will help individuals and their families avoid financial difficulties in the case of emergencies or significant medical events should be a bigger priority than the cost of the plan.

- **Learn about the benefits associated with preventive care.** Many health insurance plans offer rebates to consumers who have memberships at fitness facilities and use those memberships a certain number of times in a set period of time. These benefits aren't just ways to save money. They're also powerful motivators to engage in preventive health care, which is one of the best ways for health care consumers to save money over the long haul.

The steps to becoming a better health care consumer are simple and can ensure individuals get the most out of their medical benefits.

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suggests asking family and friends about their current providers or if they know other doctors that might be a better fit for your specific circumstances.

It's also a good idea to check with your health insurance company, as you may need to choose from a list of certain doctor's in your plan's network. However, some plans may allow you to see a doctor outside your network for a higher cost. After finding which doctors take your insurance, you will then need to call the providers' offices to confirm that they take your plan. From there, you should narrow down your top choices, considering its location and how easy it will be to get there for in-person appointments. Then, call their offices to learn more about their services. ODPHP recommends asking these questions:

- Are you taking new patients?
- Is this a group practice? If so, who are the other doctors that might help care for me?
- Who will see me if my doctor isn't available?
- Does the doctor have experience treating my medical conditions?
- Does the doctor have special training or certifications?
- Are weekend or virtual appointments available?
- What is the cancellation policy?
- How long will it take to get an appointment?
- How long do appointments usually last?
- Can I get lab work and x-rays done in the office?

After your first visit, you should then reflect on the experience, especially in terms of your comfort level during the appointment and if you felt heard and respected by the office staff. If you felt that you weren't valued as a patient, then you should likely keep looking.





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