

My insurance doesn't require a referral. How do I find a Medical Specialist?



Quick Reference Guide

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I don't need a referral. Do I need to do anything **before I see a specialist?**

Many health concerns may be handled directly by your primary care provider (PCP), so it's wise to see them first. If needed, they will direct you to an appropriate specialist for more evaluation.



If you've paid the full-time [Columbia Health & Related Services fee](#), [schedule an appointment](#) with Columbia Health's Medical Services to discuss your health. If you've seen a specialist elsewhere and are looking for an equivalent locally, Medical Services can help you find a provider.



If you have not paid the full-time fee, you will need to find an off-campus you will need to establish care with an off-campus primary care provider. They can help determine which specialist(s) you may need to see.

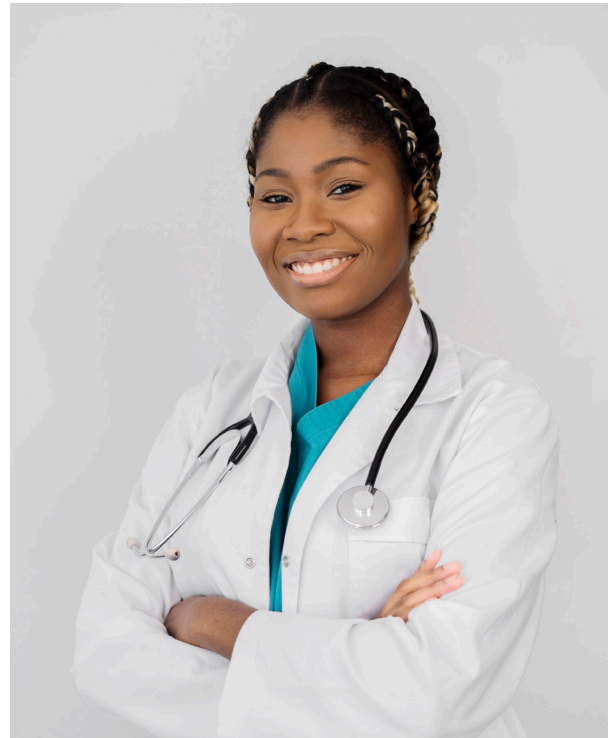


Any student can schedule an appointment with Columbia Health's Alice! Health Promotion for an Alice! Appointment. You can discuss connecting to off-campus health care and resources to find providers to support your health needs. You can also check out the [guide on how to find a PCP](#).

How can I find a specialist?

There are a few ways you can find specialists:

- › Ask your primary care provider if they have any recommendations.
- › Look at the websites of any medical centers near where you live to see if they offer the type of care you need.
- › Ask your family, friends, co-workers, or even social media to get recommendations from those you trust.
- › Do an internet search for the specialist you need and click on the link that seems appropriate:
 - You might try the [New York State Provider & Health Plan](#) lookup tool to see the directory managed by New York State.
 - [Medline Plus](#) lists directories organized by professional association.



You can find a specialist through any of these methods. Once you've found a specialist, you'll want to check that they accept your insurance plan.

How do I see professionals that are in-network with my insurance?

To see if they are in-network with your insurance, you can check your insurance directory. Log in to your insurance provider patient portal. Then you can use their directory to find providers that are in-network. If you are unsure of how to access your patient portal, you can do an internet search for “(your insurance provider)” insurance provider directory.” Upon searching, they will likely prompt you to log in to your account.

If you are unable to log in to your account, your insurance company may also have a general list of providers. For example, if you’re on the Columbia Aetna insurance plan, you could search for “Aetna insurance provider directory” and then click the link that seems appropriate.

You can review a few examples of directories for reference:

- [BlueCross BlueShield Find a Doctor](#)
- [Aetna Find a Doctor, Dentist, or Hospital](#)
 - [Aetna Directory for Student Health Insurance](#) (Use this link if on Columbia’s Aetna insurance plan!)
- [United Healthcare Find a Doctor, Dentist, or Provider](#)
- [Medicare Find & Compare Providers](#)
- Medicaid is managed by each State. You can find Medicaid providers at [FindTreatment.gov](#), or search on the internet for “Your State Medicaid provider directory” to see resources, like the [NY State Provider look-up tool](#)

I want to be seen by a professional that shares identities with me. Can I add search criteria?

Yes. Many insurance directories allow you to search for providers based on different criteria (identities, specialty, cost, availability, etc.). Use the filters to find a provider that you feel comfortable with. Remember: the more filters you add, the shorter the list of specialists will be!

Now that I’ve found a specialist I’m interested in, what do I do?

The directories and medical website often have their contact information listed. Using that information, reach out to their offices and request an initial appointment. This may also be called an initial consultation or evaluation.

This process takes time. You may need to reach out to several specialists before you find one who meets your needs! Note that you’ll need to pay a co-pay for each visit to a specialist – even if it’s a consultation or evaluation.

See our guide on talking to providers and things to think about before, during, and after an appointment.

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