

Navigating Oregon's PCP Shortage: *Take Charge of Your Healthcare*

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Have you been affected by the primary care provider (PCP) shortage in Oregon? You might have noticed it's harder to see your PCP, you're scheduled with a colleague, or your provider has moved or retired. When one of my patients experienced this recently, she couldn't get an appointment with a new PCP for over a year. The PCP shortage in Oregon is significant and unlikely to be resolved soon, which can seriously impact your healthcare.

How can you ensure your health and healthcare needs are not negatively affected? Here are some strategies to help you achieve better outcomes:

Maintain Healthy Habits

Any conversation about healthcare needs has to include a reminder about a healthy lifestyle. Prioritize healthy habits: eat well, stay hydrated, exercise regularly, manage stress, and get enough sleep. These basics can significantly improve many health issues.

Plan Ahead for Medication Refills

Request medication refills from your pharmacy before you run out. Be aware of your provider's policies; some medications may require a visit or lab tests before refills.

Schedule Appointments Strategically

Book follow-up appointments in advance, especially if you have chronic conditions. Prepare for appointments by thinking ahead about topics and questions you want to address.

Build a Healthcare Team

Expand your healthcare team beyond your PCP. This could include associate providers, naturopathic physicians, or specialists. Having additional providers can help bridge gaps if your PCP changes.

Know When to Use Urgent Care

Use urgent care for acute issues. Relying on PCPs for urgent problems can delay care. Proper primary care reduces the risk of emergency department visits and emergency surgeries.

Keep Track of Your Health

Maintain a health journal to track your health metrics, treatments, and appointments. This is especially useful if you change PCPs. If you don't have anything yet, start with the intake paperwork from your new provider, which will include allergies, medications, symptoms, and health history. Include your latest labs and treatment plan. Use this journal to coordinate with your healthcare team.

Taking personal responsibility for your healthcare can be empowering, improve your care, and ensure you get the assistance you need when you need it.



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