

## **PRIMARY CARE NETWORK**

Primary care refers to the services you receive for your basic, everyday health needs. It is your first point of contact within the health care system and is provided to you by your family doctor and other health professionals. It includes the initial care, treatment and follow-up of various conditions as well as referrals to the rest of the health system as appropriate. It also includes the promotion of wellness, and prevention and management of chronic diseases and injuries.

### **Q: What is a Primary Care Network?**

A: Primary Care Networks are a made-in-Alberta approach to ensure that you receive the right care, from the right health professional, at the right time. Led by family doctors, these Networks are improving access to, and better co-ordinating, care for Albertans.

In a Primary Care Network, a team of health professionals led by family doctors delivers and co-ordinates health services, resulting in better collaboration, more timely referrals and more comprehensive care. A Network can be one clinic with many family doctors and other health professionals (i.e. nurse practitioners, dietitians, pharmacists, social workers and mental health workers) or many family doctors and other health professionals in several clinics in the area.

### **Q: Can I keep my current family doctor?**

A: Absolutely. However, to receive care from a Primary Care Network, your family doctor must be a member of one. In fact, your family doctor leads the Network’s team in the management of your overall health care.

### **Q: What are the benefits of having a family doctor who is part of a Primary Care Network?**

A: There are several benefits to having a family doctor who is a member of a Network.

- Accessing the right care, from the right professionals, at the right time: ultimately, you, your family doctor and the Network team become partners to better manage your health.
- Co-ordination of your care: In a Primary Care Network, your family doctor can provide you with faster and easier access to needed resources provided by the Network’s team, if the services you need are not provided by your Network, the team will find the right external resource and co-ordinate a referral as part of the management of your overall health care.
- Taking control of your health care: When your family doctor is a member of a Network, you can become better engaged in your primary care. You will benefit from timely referrals to other health professionals and you are still free to make your own choices about managing your health care.

### **Q: How do I find out if my family doctor is part of a Primary Care Network?**

A: Ask at your next visit to your family doctor or call Health Link Alberta at 1-866-408-LINK (5465)

### **Q: Can I use a Primary Care Network of my choice?**

A: You can only access the Primary Care Network to which your family doctor belongs.

**Q: What if I don’t have a family doctor?**

A: It is important to have a family doctor for timely and co-ordinated access to primary care. Contact Health Link Alberta, 1-866-408-LINK (5465) for assistance in finding a family doctor who is accepting new patients in your area.

**Q: My family doctor is not part of a Primary Care Network. Will I have the same access to health services?**

A: All family doctors, whether or not they are members of a Primary Care Network, have access to specialized health services and the ability to make referrals. The difference is that in a Network, patients have ready access to the team of health professionals who work with the Network team. In addition, some Networks have also partnered with medical specialists who work within the PCN to provide improved access to care.

**Q: What are some services that Primary Care Networks provide?**

A: All Primary Care Networks will provide some or all of the following services, depending on local needs:

Basic ambulatory care and follow-up	Minor emergency care
Care of complex health problems and follow-up	Primary inpatient care at hospitals and long term care facilities
Psychological counselling	Rehabilitative care
Chronic disease screening and prevention (heart disease, diabetes, etc)	Information management
Family planning and pregnancy counselling	Population health
Child health care (prenatal, post-natal and school health care, etc)	Management of access to appropriate primary care services, 24/7
Obstetrical care	Access to laboratory and diagnostic imaging
End-of-life care	Co-ordination of home care, emergency room service, long-term care, secondary care and public health
Geriatric care (seniors’ wellness, residential long-term care, etc)	Assisting patients, without a family doctor, to become attached to a doctor and receive care
Minor surgery	Care of chronically ill patients

Visit [www.albertapci.ca](http://www.albertapci.ca) to find out what services your PCN provides.

**Q: I have more questions. Where can I get more information?**

A: Visit [albertapci.ca](http://albertapci.ca) or contact Health Link Alberta for more information about Primary Care Networks and/or how to connect with a family doctor. Toll free, 1-866-408-LINK (5465), Mandarin Health Link Calgary at 403-943-1554, Cantonese Health Link Calgary at 403-943-1556.

Source: Primary Care Networks Work 4 You, Primary Care Initiative, [www.albertapci.ca](http://www.albertapci.ca)

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