

## *Common Questions related to choosing a physician*

- 1. What is meant by a primary care provider?**

Most insurance companies ask you to choose a primary care provider. For children this can be a pediatrician or a family practice physician. For adults this can be a family practice physician or an internal medicine physician.
- 2. What is the difference between a Medical Doctor (MD) and a Doctor of Osteopathy (DO)?**

MD's and DO's are individuals licensed to practice medicine in the state of Nebraska. To receive a license they must successfully complete four years of medical school and pass the same national exam. The primary difference is in the specific content and philosophies of the individual training curriculums.
- 3. How do I choose a specialist if I need one?**

Often your primary care provider is required to make a referral to a specialist. However, if your insurance does not require a referral from your primary care provider, it is still a good idea to ask your physician for a recommendation. You will also want to check the specialist's credentials and their practice experience.
- 4. What does it mean to be "board certified?"**

Every physician practicing medicine in Nebraska has passed state certifying boards and has been issued a license to practice medicine in the state of Nebraska. Almost every specialty, including family practice, internal medicine and pediatrics have available what is called specialty boards. This means any physician board certified in their specialty has successfully passed a specific exam related to their specialty. Board certification is not required to practice medicine in the state of Nebraska.
- 5. What is a physician extender?**

Nurse practitioners and physician assistants are both considered physician extenders in the state of Nebraska. Physicians work closely with their physician extenders to provide good medical care to their patients. Physician extenders function differently in each individual physicians clinic, but they are all licensed by the state to perform very specific medical interventions. Certified Nurse Midwives are not considered physician extenders, but are licensed by the state to perform very specific medical interventions and function under a contractual relationship with a physician.
- 6. What is a Hospitalist?**

Hospitalists are internal medicine physicians that care for patients during a hospital stay. Both BryanLGH Medical Center and Saint Elizabeth Regional Medical Center have active hospitalist programs. These physicians work closely with the patients' primary care physician and physician specialists to provide comprehensive care to the patient during their hospital stay. Hospitalists are on staff 24 hours a day to assure coordination of all hospital services.
- 7. What is an Intensivist?**

Intensivists are physicians with special credentials in the treatment of critical illnesses. Both BryanLGH Medical Center and St. Elizabeth Regional Medical Center have intensivists who help care for critically ill hospitalized patients.