Finding a new doctor doesn't have to be a guessing game: a NetWellness column
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Question: I need some advice on finding a new doctor.

I am 56 and weigh 225 pounds. I spent many decades and tens of thousands of dollars trying to be a thinner person. Every single program, plan, and diet that I tried to follow was recommended by and monitored by a doctor.

Finally, I reassessed my relationship with my body and made a conscious decision to stop fighting my weight. Instead I try to focus on eating healthy foods and - when I could - exercise. I have several other health issues that I need to take care of besides my weight.

My long time doctor retired so I had to find another. It took me 3 months to get an appointment. At my first appointment the new doctor spent 25 minutes trying to talk me into getting bariatric surgery. The only thing she would discuss is my weight.

I feel like I have no right to even go to the doctor any more unless I lose 100 lbs. first. What am I supposed to do? Do I keep trying to make a new appointment with a different doctor every three
months until I find one who is willing to see that I am a whole person, not just a "weight"?

**Answer:** When searching for a new primary care physician, there are many options and resources one could use.

Among those are as:

- **Word of mouth from a friend, neighbor or co-worker**
- **Insurance plans**
- **Internet search**

A convenient geographic location to the practice may also be important.

Contact your local Medical Association for names of physicians. Ask friends and relatives about their doctors. Although you are 56, you may find help from your local Area Agency on Aging to provide some names of physicians in your locale.

**Shopping Around For Your New Doctor**

Once you have some health care professionals in mind, it is recommended that you interview the doctor to find out if your beliefs and values about health and wellness are a match.

You do not have to register with the practice to visit and have a brief introductory consult with the physician to gauge if he or she is the right person for you. At this time you can have the opportunity to:

- **Judge physician experience and style**
- **Assess services provided**
- **Meet the practice staff to see how helpful and courteous they are**
- **Express your own preferences and expectations**

**Be Prepared**

- **Ask questions:** Begin by asking questions about the doctor’s approach to obesity and your other health care issues, as well as being clear what your own beliefs are about holistic approach. This may be helpful, so that you won’t feel that you’ve wasted time and become even more frustrated.

- **Symptom list:** To improve communication between you and your physician, you can have a 'list' of symptoms and questions as often under time pressures during the visit something important may be missed.

- **Medication list:** You should carry all the medications and over-the-counter medications, eye drops and inhalers with you. Bring someone who can be a facilitator or speak for you if the you are having difficulty in expressing yourself.

- **Take your time:** Always seek appointment times which are best for you and keep half a day free for the doctor's visit.
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Some useful websites
• Use the American Medical Association's Doctor Finder to locate physicians near you.
• To locate your local Area Agency on Aging, please visit the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging website.

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