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The Search for the Elusive Family Physician

It seems to be a common experience these days: you, or someone in your family, is trying to manage your health without a family physician. Whether it is because you do not have a physician, or because your current professional is not a good fit, a lack of access to regular medical care can require that you navigate a very complex medical system on your own and this can delay diagnoses. Being 'doctorless' can be a challenging way to manage your well-being.

It is not a surprise. According to an August 2023 Global News story, one in five Canadians does not have a family doctor. Of those who did have a family doctor, 29% of Canadians found it difficult to schedule an appointment and often waited a week or more to get it. According to an August 2022 Angus Reid survey, one in four people in BC do not have a family doctor.

How to find a family physician

Did you know you can register with the Government of BC to join a wait list for a physician or nurse practitioner in your area? Go to: <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-connect-registry>

For those who may not be familiar with a nurse practitioner, according to the Canadian Nursing Association, nurse practitioners are "registered nurses who have additional education and nursing experience, which enables them to treat the whole person." Nurse practitioners can diagnose and treat illnesses without the

supervision of a physician, order and interpret medical tests, write prescriptions for medications, make referrals, and even perform specific medical procedures. [Find out more about nurse practitioners.](#)

To find clinics or family physicians taking new patients in your area, visit <https://www.findadoctorbc.ca/> and enter your location.

The Fraser Health Authority has issued [Tips to find a family doctor in BC](#), a helpful document with links for both Metro Vancouver and all areas of BC.

It can also be helpful to talk to friends and family members to see if their family physicians are currently accepting new patients.

In the meantime ...

While you wait to find a family physician to call your own, need a quick prescription fill, or cannot schedule a timely appointment with your own physician, you can access virtual physicians in a variety of ways. British Columbia's MSP plan covers many of these online physician visits, and the following service providers offer physician calls/video appointments covered by the plan:

<https://vivacare.ca/telehealth-online-doctor/>

<https://virtualclinics.ca/>

<https://www.telus.com/en/health/my-care/doctors>

<https://tiahealth.com/>

There are also opportunities through private clinics and services where you pay to have an appointment with a physician. These 'paid' visits may be quicker and easier to access and may connect you with other services. One vendor we researched quoted a single session fee of \$69 and also offered bundled appointment pricing. Accessing a fee for service vendor may be an option for some who wish to start their investigation into a health issue while waiting for regular access to a family physician.

However you approach the task of finding a family physician, you are practicing self-care when you place an important focus on the maintenance and improvement of your health.

Sources:

<https://www.mapleridgenews.com/news/more-than-60-of-b-c-adults-have-no-family-doctor-or-poor-access-to-one-poll-2672161>

<https://globalnews.ca/news/9901922/canadians-family-doctor-shortage-cma-survey/#:~:text=More%20than%20one%20in%20five,according%20to%20the%20CMA%20survey.>

[https://www.cna-aiic.ca/en/nursing/advanced-nursing-practice/nurse-practitioners#:~:text=Nurse%20practitioners%20\(NPs\)%20are%20registered,Prescribe%20medications](https://www.cna-aiic.ca/en/nursing/advanced-nursing-practice/nurse-practitioners#:~:text=Nurse%20practitioners%20(NPs)%20are%20registered,Prescribe%20medications)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Morandini', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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If you would like to contribute or have ideas about what you would like to see in the ReFresh series, we would love to hear from you: contact rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca.