



Four things that would surprise you about health care

Health care is anything but predictable. These four facts about your health and the care you receive may surprise you.

1. A long, caring and respectful relationship with your doctor is more beneficial to your health than you think.

Forming a long-term relationship with your primary care physician is the most important thing you can do for your health, according to a Consumer Reports survey of 660 physicians.

But having that strong relationship isn't a guarantee. You'll need to invest some energy—and make sure you find doctors who will do the same. Find out more about why the relationship with your physician is crucial in the article [“What doctors wish their patients knew.”](#)

2. Getting more health care won't necessarily make you any healthier.

Nearly half of primary care physicians say their own patients get too much medical care, according to a survey published in 2011 by researchers at Dartmouth College. And all that care is not helping people live better or longer.

Researchers at Dartmouth found that “patients with serious conditions who are treated in regions that provide the most aggressive medical care—have the most tests and procedures, see the most specialists, and spend the most days in hospitals—don't live longer or enjoy a better quality of life than those who receive more conservative treatment.”

Read more about why [getting more health care isn't better](#).

3. One-third of all health care isn't necessary.

According to the Institute of Medicine, as much as 30 percent of health care in the U.S. is just not needed. There are several reasons why this happens. Doctors have little information on what constitutes the “right” amount of health care; most doctors are paid per test, visit or procedure; and ... you, the patient, request it.

Every unnecessary test or procedure is doing two things: exposing you to harmful side effects and racking up your medical bills.

You can learn it's okay to [say “Whoa!” to your doctor](#) whenever a recommended test or procedure feels unwarranted.

4. You're paying different prices—for the same treatment.

Not all health care is created equal—in dollars especially. There are significant price differences in the health care you receive.

Consumer Reports writes, the “contracted prices that health plans negotiate with providers in their networks have little or nothing to do with the actual quality of services provided and everything to do with the relative bargaining power of the providers.”

A little legwork can often go a long way. Read more about the cost differences and what you can do about them.



For more information, visit the [Choosing Wisely® resources from Consumer Reports](#).

This article is part of a toolkit that supports the Choosing Wisely® campaign, an initiative of the ABIM Foundation in partnership with Consumer Reports to help patients and physicians have conversations about health. The articles, tip sheets and links in the series will provide helpful information on everything from coping with serious illness, to preventive care, to the do's and don'ts of common tests. For more information, see [the rest of the series](#) and all the [Choosing Wisely resources from Consumer Reports](#).