

Getting Started:

An Introduction to Health Care in British Columbia for Newcomer Women and Their Families

FACT SHEET 3:



Taking care of your health is an important part of adjusting to life in Canada.

WHAT IS A NURSE PRACTITIONER (NP)?

Nurse practitioners (NPs) are an important part of the health care system in British Columbia. An NP is an experienced registered nurse (RN) that has completed extra education and training at the Masters level. They work with patients to support physical and mental health. NPs work in community clinics, hospitals and doctor's offices, increasing access to health care and the number of patients with a regular primary care provider.

WHAT IS PRIMARY CARE?

When you are sick or have a medical question it is important to know who can help you. **Primary Health Care** refers to the help you receive when you first become sick or need assistance with the management of a chronic illness (such as diabetes and high blood pressure) but are not so sick or injured that you need to go to a hospital for emergency services. Depending on what you need and where you go for health care, there may be many different people involved in your care. This fact sheet explains the roles of nurse practitioners in British Columbia including the services and benefits they can offer you.

NURSE PRACTITIONERS PROVIDE MANY SERVICES:

Nurse Practitioners:

- Diagnose, treat, and manage illnesses
- Order and read medical tests
- Write prescriptions for most medications when required
- Provide health education

Nurse Practitioners do not deliver babies or do surgery.

BENEFITS OF HAVING A NURSE PRACTITIONER:

- NPs are quick and easy to access, appointments are readily available
- Are valued and trusted by patients
- Provide high quality management of chronic illnesses such as diabetes and high blood pressure

MAKING AN APPOINTMENT TO SEE A NURSE PRACTITIONER:

Phone the nurse practitioner's clinic or office to make an appointment.

When you go for your appointment, tell the person at the front desk your name and show them your BC Services card or identification. You will then have to wait until the nurse practitioner is ready to see you.

DO I STILL NEED TO HAVE A FAMILY DOCTOR?

Nurse Practitioners and **Family Doctors** (often referred to as a General Practitioners or **GPs**) are the first people you will go to for Primary Health Care. NPs can be your primary health care provider, giving care that is similar to what you would receive from a family doctor. Your NP will refer you to a doctor or specialist if additional care is needed.

YOUR ROLE IN HEALTH CARE

You are an important part of your health care. Knowing your health care providers (such as Nurse Practitioners) and understanding their role will help you plan for your care. You can help your NP by keeping track of your appointments, treatments and medications. You can share this information with other health care workers you see so that they can work with you and your NP to give you the best care.



LINKS

If you need health care right away and it is not an emergency, you can call 8-1-1 to speak to someone (such as a nurse, pharmacist or dietitian) about your health concern and where you should go for help. This service is free and is available in many languages.

If you have a serious accident or suddenly get very sick, you should go to a hospital Emergency. You do not have to pay if you have Medical Services Plan health insurance.

If you need an ambulance, call 9-1-1.



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