

Knowing Your Health Care Options Better

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Ontario has updated the Health Care Options website ontario.ca/healthcareoptions to make it even easier for Ontarians to learn about the health care options in their communities and avoid unnecessary visits to the emergency room. Since it was originally launched in February 2009, the site has received more than 1.5 million visits from Ontarians.

It directs people to places they can go in their community for care – such as Telehealth Ontario, family health care providers, Family Health Teams, walk-in and after-hours clinics, urgent care centres, and hospital emergency rooms. Listed below is a definition of these health services and what they provide.

Health Care Option	What it is...	How it can help...
Telehealth Ontario	Telehealth Ontario is a free, confidential telephone service people can call to get health advice or general health information from a registered nurse.	Provides round-the-clock access, to a qualified health care professional – helping you decide whether to care for yourself, make an appointment with your family doctor or nurse practitioner, go to a clinic, contact community resources near you or go to a hospital emergency room.
Family Doctor	Doctors are key family health care providers. They focus on family medicine – diagnosing and treating diseases, physical disorders and injuries in patients of all ages.	Provides immediate care for non-emergency situations, and continuous care to help you lead a healthier life.
Family Health Team	A Family Health Team brings together different health care providers to deliver high quality, team-based patient care. Family Health Teams are designed to give physicians support from other health care professionals – such as nurses, nurse practitioners, dietitians and pharmacists – who work together to provide you with a range of health care options.	Provides care for non-emergency situations, and continuous care to help you lead a healthier life.
Nurse Practitioners	Nurse practitioners are registered nurses with additional education and experience. They diagnose and treat most diseases, order and interpret diagnostic tests, communicate diagnoses, prescribe medicine and perform specific procedures on patients of all ages. You can also find nurse practitioners	Provides ongoing care while helping promote disease prevention and healthy living.

	working throughout the province in Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinics, Family Health Teams and other types of clinics.	
Community Health Centres	Community Health Centres are organizations that provide health care and health promotion programs for individuals, families and communities. A health centre is established and governed by a community-elected board of directors.	Provides care for those who have difficulty accessing primary health care due to barriers such as language, culture, physical disabilities, homelessness, poverty or geographic isolation.
Diabetes Education Program	A diabetes education program provides the tools and skills needed to support people living with diabetes so they can lead a more full and healthy life. In both group settings and one-on-one counselling, individuals learn self-management skills from a team of health care professionals – including diabetes nurse educators and registered dietitians.	Provides information on self-management skills and helps people develop life plans to help both minimize their symptoms and delay or prevent the onset of diabetes complications.
Walk-in or after-hours clinic	A walk-in clinic is a non-hospital based clinic where care is provided for patients with uncomplicated and non-emergency needs. Clinic hours usually extend into the evenings and weekends and often do not require an appointment.	Provides immediate care for non-emergency situations, with a range of services similar to those provided in your primary care physician's office.
Urgent Care Centre	Urgent Care Centres provide services to patients – without an appointment – who are seeking treatment for non-life threatening conditions during the day, in the evening and on weekends.	Provides immediate care for minor or uncomplicated conditions in less urgent situations such as eye injuries, sutures, casts, and provides access to X-rays and laboratory tests.
Emergency Room	The emergency room is the hospital department responsible for providing medical and surgical care to patients in need of urgent medical attention.	Provides immediate care for emergency situations – including serious or life-threatening illnesses or injuries.

For public inquiries call ServiceOntario, INFOline at 1-866-532-3161 (Toll-free in Ontario only)