



“Quality” health care: What is it and how can you get it?



Information for a Healthy Oregon

We collaborate with patients, providers, health plans, and purchasers to measure and improve health care quality in Oregon.

A project of the Oregon Health Care Quality Corporation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Aligning Forces for Quality Initiative.



What is “quality” health care?

It’s care that helps you stay healthy.

It’s care that helps you recover faster from an illness or injury.

It’s the kind of care you want for you and your family.

- **“Quality” means getting care that works.**

You should be given the type of care that medical research has shown to work best for your condition.

- **“Quality” means getting care when you need it.**

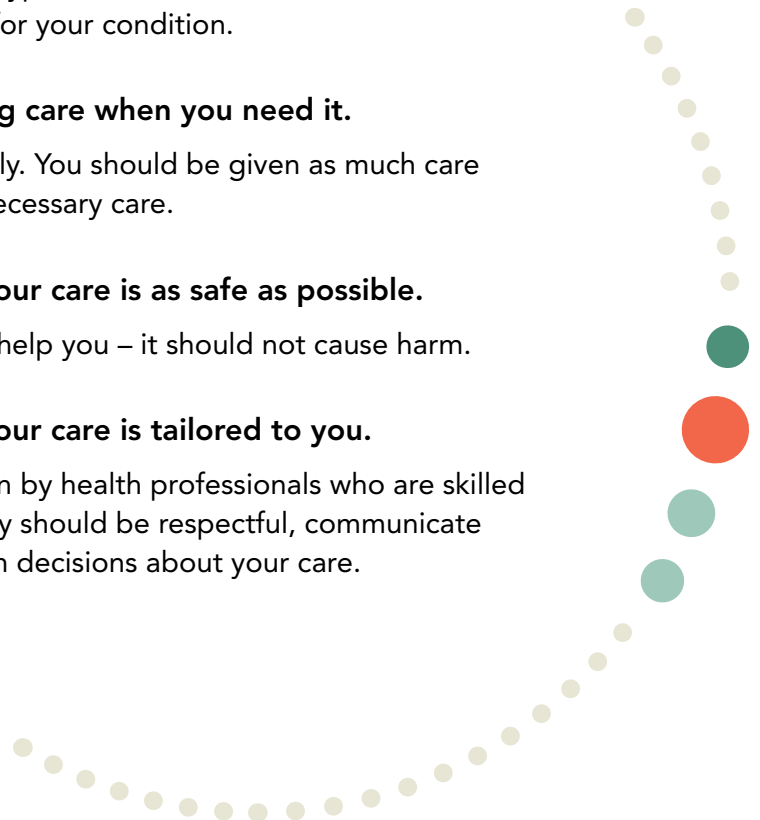
Your care should be timely. You should be given as much care as you need, but no unnecessary care.

- **“Quality” means that your care is as safe as possible.**

Your health care should help you – it should not cause harm.

- **“Quality” means that your care is tailored to you.**

Your care should be given by health professionals who are skilled and knowledgeable. They should be respectful, communicate clearly, and involve you in decisions about your care.



But isn't *all* health care “quality” care?

No - unfortunately, all health care is *not* quality care.

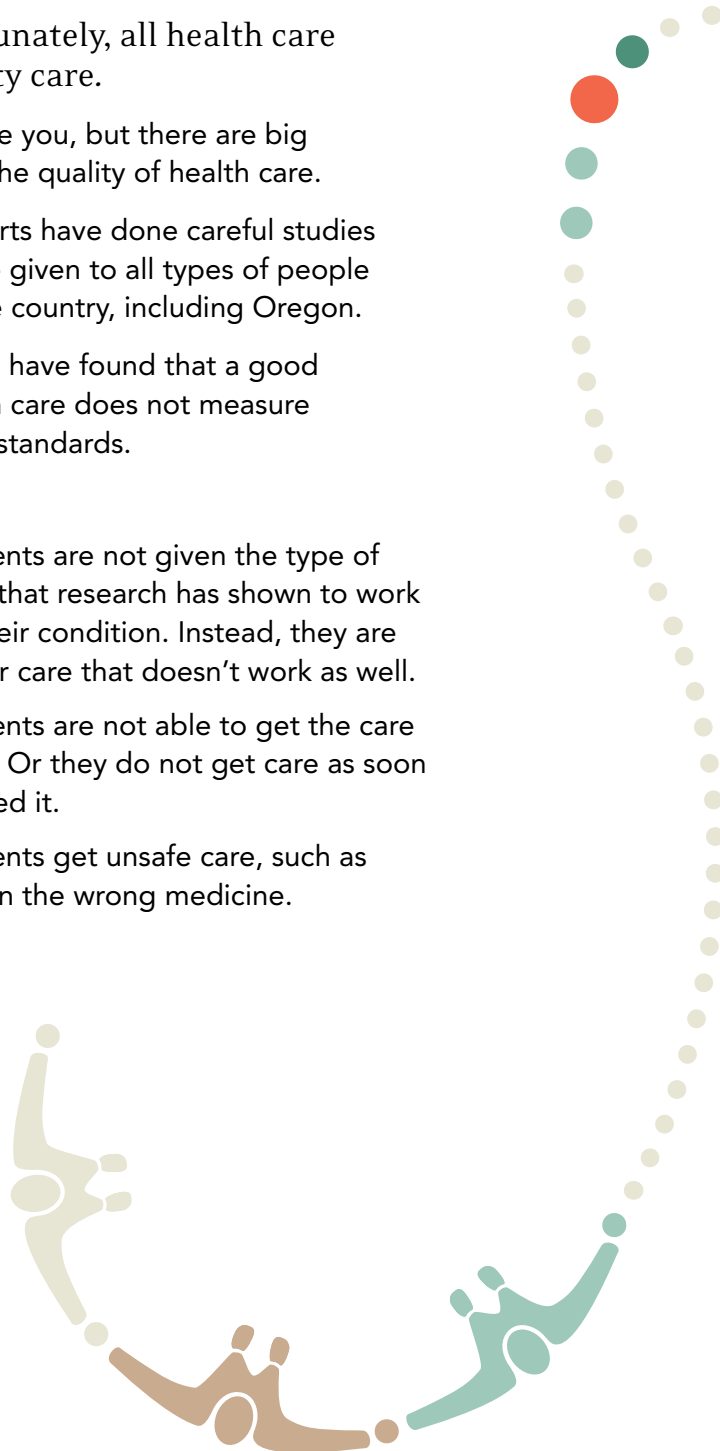
It may surprise you, but there are big variations in the quality of health care.

Medical experts have done careful studies of health care given to all types of people all around the country, including Oregon.

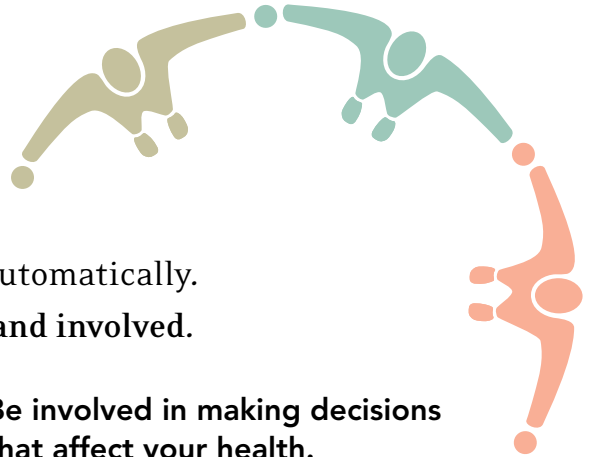
These studies have found that a good deal of health care does not measure up to quality standards.

For example:

- Many patients are not given the type of treatment that research has shown to work best for their condition. Instead, they are given other care that doesn't work as well.
- Many patients are not able to get the care they need. Or they do not get care as soon as they need it.
- Many patients get unsafe care, such as being given the wrong medicine.



What can *you* do?



It's clear that "quality" care doesn't happen automatically. To get quality care, **you need to be informed and involved.**

1. Ask questions.

If you ask questions and get answers you don't understand, ask again. Remember, it's your body and you need to understand the advice and information you are being given.

2. Do your part to help stay healthy.

- Stay up to date on your screening tests and other preventive care.
- If you have a health condition such as diabetes, high blood pressure, or asthma, find out what you need to do to manage this condition.
- Go in for health care as soon as you need it. Delays in getting care can make health problems more serious, more costly, and harder to treat.
- If you get sick or injured, follow your treatment plan to help recover faster.
- Do your best to eat healthy foods, stay active, and keep to a healthy weight.

3. Be involved in making decisions that affect your health.

When your doctor or other health professional recommends tests or treatment, ask for the information you need to make an informed decision. For example, you might want to know:

- Why the tests are needed and how the results will be used.
- Whether any research has been done to find out which treatments work best.
- How the treatment is expected to help and what risks are involved.
- What could happen if you don't have the tests or treatment.

4. Learn more.

There is information available to help you learn more about quality, health conditions and treatment, and ways to stay healthy.

Good sources include your doctor, other health professionals, health plans, hospitals, public libraries, and non-profit organizations that focus on particular health conditions. Websites are a good source of health information, if you choose them carefully.