



*Helping you get  
quality health care:*

**Getting the kind  
of care that  
works the best**

**Partner for  
Quality Care**



*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 care that “works the best”?

Care that “works the best” is care that gets the **best results** for your health and is as **safe** as possible.



### How do we know which kinds of care work best?

Good question. Doctors and medical scientists do many research studies to find out:

- What works best to catch health problems early.
- What tests are best for finding out what’s wrong.
- Which treatments help the most and have the fewest side effects.

Every year, more medical research studies are done. These studies can provide new information on which kinds of care work best and are the safest.

### People don’t always get the care that works the best

It’s surprising but true: Many people do not get the care that has been shown to work best for their condition. Instead, they are given other kinds of care that don’t work as well – or no care at all.

A study in 12 large U.S. communities checked to see whether children were getting the care that is known to work the best. The results weren’t good. For example:

- Only 19% of seriously ill infants with fevers had the right lab tests done.
- Only 46% of children with asthma were on the right medications.

The problem isn’t limited to kids. Other research studies have shown that many adults are not getting the care that works best. For example, many people with diabetes do not get certain tests and exams that they should be getting to stay healthy with diabetes.

### Getting the kind of care that works the best

For some conditions, we don’t know which care works best because there hasn’t been enough medical research.

But for many conditions, research has shown which kinds of care tend to help the most and are the safest. This research can help you and your doctor choose care that works best and stay away from care that doesn’t help.

For tips on things you can do to get the kind of care that works best, keep reading.

# 4 tips for getting the care that works the best

## 1 Use a consumer guide

The federal Agency on Health Care Research and Quality has produced a series of helpful consumer guides that tell which kinds of care work best for certain health conditions.

These guides are based on medical research. They are written for patients, not for doctors.

Topics include blood pressure medicine, pills for Type 2 diabetes, medicine for osteoarthritis and for rheumatoid arthritis, prostate cancer treatment, and treatment of GERD (gastroesophageal reflux disease).

To get these guides, visit the website [www.effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov](http://www.effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov) or call (800) 358-9295 for a printed copy.

To stay active, I needed something for arthritis pain. To help me understand the choices, my doctor gave me a guide that compares arthritis medicines. It explains the risks and benefits of each one. It even tells how much they cost.



## 2 Do your own search to find out which kinds of care work best

For practical advice and recommended sources for reliable health information, read this government guide: *Next steps after diagnosis: finding information and support*. You can find it at [www.ahrq.gov/consumer/diaginfo.htm](http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/diaginfo.htm).

If you are looking for health information on the internet, be very careful about which websites you use. For tips, look for our handout *How can you find trustworthy health information on the web?* ([www.PartnerForQualityCare.org](http://www.PartnerForQualityCare.org)).



I had questions and concerns about my cancer diagnosis and I wanted to learn more. A government guide helped me find a website that told about my type of cancer and the research on which treatments work the best.

I took this information to my next appointment and talked about it with my doctor.





### 3 Check to see if care you are getting meets the quality standards

A huge amount of research has been done to find out what care works best for keeping people healthy when they have an ongoing condition such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease.

Doctors who are national experts have looked at this research very carefully and used it to develop quality standards or "guidelines" for best patient care.

If your care follows these guidelines, then you know you're getting the care that works the best to keep you healthy.



I thought I was doing everything I should to stay healthy with diabetes. Then I read a handout and found out that I was getting only 6 of the 10 tests and exams I should be getting. I made an appointment right away. Now I'm up to date on everything.

You can get this handout (*Ten tests and exams everyone with diabetes should be getting*) and others at the Oregon Diabetes Resource Bank website ([www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/diabetes/resourcebank/10tests.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/diabetes/resourcebank/10tests.shtml)).

### 4 Ask your doctor if there's been any research on what care works the best

When it's time to decide on tests and treatment, ask questions to help make sure that you and your family get the care that works the best.

For tips on asking questions, look for this handout on our website: *Making the most of your medical appointments*.

So you're saying there are two treatments we can choose from. Is there any research that compares how well they work?

