

Ontarians Have More Health Care Options Than Ever Before McGuinty Government Empowers Ontarians To Make Better Health Care Choices

NEWS

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With the simple click of a mouse or the touch of a smart phone, Ontarians can access the newly re-launched [health care options](#) web site and get to know the health care options in their communities better.

In a matter of seconds, Ontarians can locate and contact the health care option that's closest to home — whether it's a family health team, urgent care centre or walk-in clinic. They can also learn about the different services these health care options offer as well as when and how to access them. They can share all this information with friends and families through social networking tools, like Facebook and Twitter.

The redeveloped website also includes other user-friendly tools that will make it easier for Ontarians to get the health care they need:

- An online registry for Health Care Connect, a referral service that has already matched more than 42,000 Ontarians with doctors who are accepting patients
- A searchable tool that helps Ontarians find the wait time for surgeries offered at their local hospital and discuss with their doctor whether other nearby hospitals can perform the procedure more quickly
- A series of interactive videos to introduce Ontarians to some newer health care options — things like nurse practitioner-led clinics and family health teams
- A searchable tool that provides Ontarians with wait time information in their local hospital's emergency room
- A section called 'Understanding Health Care in Ontario' to help newcomers to Ontario learn how to navigate the province's health care system.

Knowing their options will allow Ontarians to choose the best health care service for their needs, reducing pressure on emergency rooms. Approximately 40 per cent of all visits to the emergency room are related to less urgent or non-urgent conditions that may be treated elsewhere.

Connecting Ontarians to the right health care is part of the government's Open Ontario Plan to provide more access to health care services while improving quality and accountability for patients.

QUOTES

"We're giving Ontarians the tools they need to find health care close to home and learn about all the options available to them. We want to make navigating the health care system as simple as possible and empower Ontarians to get to know their health care system better. "

-- Deb Matthews, Health and Long-Term Care Minister

QUICK FACTS

- One million more Ontarians have been attached to a family doctor than in 2003.
- Ontario has created 200 family health teams and 25 nurse practitioner-led clinics which will eventually care for more than 3 million Ontarians.
- Ontario.ca/HealthCareOptions was originally launched in February 2009. The web site has received more than 1.5 million visits to date.

LEARN MORE

Visit the [Health Care Options](http://HealthCareOptions) website.

Check out videos on the [Ministry's YouTube Channel](#).

[Follow Minister Deb Matthews on Twitter](#).

Visit [Ontario's Newsroom](#).

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Knowing Your Health Care Options Better

November 1, 2010

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)