



Massachusetts Health Quality Partners (MHQP) is a coalition of doctors, patients, hospitals, health plans, government agencies, and other health care organizations working to improve the quality of health care in Massachusetts. To learn more go to www.mhqp.org.

Ways to learn more about quality health care:

- *Consumer Reports* is an expert, independent, nonprofit organization that works to ensure a fair, just, and safe marketplace for all consumers and empower consumers to protect themselves. Learn more at www.consumerreports.org.
- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' *Physician Compare* website has information about Medicare-enrolled physicians and health care professionals <http://www.medicare.gov/find-a-doctor/>.
- The Massachusetts Board of Registry in Medicine is a state agency that allows patients to learn about their doctors or file a complaint. The website is www.mass.gov/massmedboard.

When patients have a good experience with doctors, they are more likely to come back for tests, take medications as prescribed, and better manage their care at home. Quality health care matters a lot to both patients and doctors.

—Michael Cantor, M.D., Chief Medical Officer of the New England Quality Care Alliance.

www.mhqp.org

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QUALITY HEALTH CARE:

How Parents Can Work With Doctors to Improve Their Child's Health



You want quality health care for your child. Your child's doctor wants that, too. But is your child's health care as good as it should be? *Consumer Reports* and *Massachusetts Health Quality Partners* (MHQP) teamed up to answer that question.

The best quality health care takes place when doctors – along with nurse practitioners, physician assistants, other clinicians, and office staff – work as partners with patients, family members, caregivers, and the public.

What does it mean to be partners in health care? That is when doctors and patients work closely together—talking about health problems, making thoughtful choices, and coming up with plans that patients can, and will, follow.



This brochure looks at many aspects of quality health care. It includes:

- Questions about your child's health care.
- Results showing how Massachusetts parents answered these questions.
- Boxes to check with your answers about quality health care.
- Ways that patients can partner with their doctors.

We hope that this helps explain some aspects of quality health care. For more information, visit MHQP's website www.mhqp.org.



Below are questions you can answer about experiences with your child's doctor. There are also lists of what parents can do to help make care better.

Does your child's doctor talk about how he or she is growing?

In a survey of Massachusetts parents, 90% said that their child's doctor always does this. Does your child's doctor talk about your child's height and weight?

Yes, always Sometimes No, never

What you can do:

- Your child's doctor should discuss what to expect in terms of your child's height and weight.
- If your child's height or weight differs from what is expected, ask the doctor why. Also discuss what, if anything, you or others should do.

"The doctor is the medical expert, but you're the expert about you and your child," says Lester Hartman, M.D., the quality improvement director at Westwood-Mansfield Pediatric Associates. He says that when doctors, patients, and parents work together this can result in the best health care for all.



Does your child's doctor talk about ways to keep your child safe?

This includes ways to prevent your child from getting hurt or injured.

In a survey of Massachusetts parents, 71% said that their child's doctor always does this. Does your child's doctor talk about ways to keep your child safe?

Yes, always Sometimes No, never

What you can do:

- Ask your child's doctor about ways to keep your child safe. This includes keeping the poison control number near your phone. It also means making sure that your child wears a seat belt when riding in the car and a helmet when on a bike.
- Discuss ways to make your home safer. If you have a swimming pool, make sure there is a fence around it. If you have guns, make sure they are kept in a locked cabinet.

Accidents and injuries are a leading cause of death and disability among young children and teenagers.

Does your child's doctor talk about your child's diet and eating habits?

This includes how much, and the kinds of food your child eats.

In a survey of Massachusetts parents, 89% said that their child's doctor always does this. Does your child's doctor talk about your child's diet and eating habits?

Yes, always Sometimes No, never

What you can do:

- Talk with your child's doctor about your child's diet, weight, and eating habits.
- Ask what to do if your child is overweight or obese. The doctor might refer your child to a certified nutritionist or a registered dietician.

A lot of children today are overweight or obese. Studies show that this can lead to many types of health problems. These include type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and liver disease.

Does your child's doctor ask about your child's behavior?

This may be when your child has a lot of tantrums, is very shy or quiet, or has problems at school.

In a survey of Massachusetts parents, 81% said that their child's doctor always does this. Does your child's doctor ask about your child's behavior?

Yes, always Sometimes No, never

What you can do:

- Talk with the doctor about behaviors to expect for your child's age.
- Let the doctor know if you are worried about your child's behavior. Ask what to do when your child behaves this way.

Doctors should talk about a child's behavior. Sometimes there are problems. For instance, preschool and school-aged children may show signs of delayed speech, autism, or Asperger's Syndrome.

Does your child's doctor's office remind you about preventative care?

This includes needed vaccines, yearly flu shots, eye exams, and other ways of keeping your child healthy.

In a survey of Massachusetts parents, 86% said that their child's doctor always does this. Does your child's doctor remind you about preventative care for your child?

Yes, always Sometimes No, never

What you can do:

- Make sure that your child gets all needed vaccines, shots, and exams.
- Your child's doctor should talk about a vaccine's or test's benefits (how these can help) and risks (problems they may cause).
- The doctor should keep track of when your child gets preventative care. The doctor should also say when your child needs other vaccines, shots, and exams.
- Ask the doctor if your child needs other exams, such as hearing tests.

Studies show that vaccines can save lives. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that children get vaccines to help prevent a lot of childhood diseases. These include measles, whooping cough, and the flu.

