



CHOOSING A NEW PHYSICIAN

Finding the right doctor for your primary healthcare needs can go a long way toward maintaining a long and healthy life



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CHARGE
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HEALTH**

Willie Jones is a pretty laid-back soul most of the time, but he was anything but when it came to finding a new doctor.

The 69-year-old Civil Service retiree spent five months actively researching Cumberland County physicians before deciding on a doctor with Hope Mills Family Care.

Five months may seem like a long time to decide on anything, let alone a doctor, but Jones had certain criteria his next physician had to meet. The doctor had to be male, have an office close by, accept Jones' Tricare military insurance and, most importantly, make Jones feel comfortable as a patient.

So Jones spent weeks researching doctor bios on Cape Fear Valley's website. He then spent the rest of the time asking friends and family about his pared-down choices.

"I don't play around," Jones says, with a chuckle. "It was a pretty fair amount of research."

Experts say choosing a good doctor is one of the most important steps toward achieving good health. A personal physician can provide regular checkups that can catch serious health problems early. Having your own physician also gives you one less thing to worry about if you suddenly become ill. But many never get around to choosing one and then have to make a rushed choice after an emergency occurs.

Jones chose Johnnie Moultrie, M.D., a relatively young doctor, but a lifelong Fayetteville resident and Douglas Byrd High School graduate – facts that caught Jones' attention. Moultrie's East Carolina University medical school degree, relatively close office and excellent bedside manner helped clinch the deal.

Dr. Moultrie says Jones did the right thing by doing his homework before deciding, because of the sheer number of doctors typically in a community.

"It's kind of like buying a house," Dr. Moultrie says. "There's no one perfect fit for everyone."

Dr. Moultrie says advice from family and friends can be helpful, but there are plenty of other things to consider.

Here are some other questions that can help you decide if a doctor is right for you:

- Where is the doctor's office? How easy is it to get there? Can you get there by public transportation?
- What are the office hours? Is it open evenings or weekends?
- How easy is it to get an appointment? Can you be seen the same day you call in?
- Which hospital does the doctor use?
- Is the office staff courteous and prompt?
- Who covers for your primary physician if he or she is on vacation?
- Is the physician's age a concern? Is the physician in good standing?
- Does the doctor's office take your insurance? Does the office process insurance claims, or do you file the claim yourself?

If you are seeking a new doctor and aren't sure where to start, you can start your search with Cape Fear Valley's Find a Physician webpage just like Jones did. The page is located at <http://www.capefearvalley.com>. Click on Find A Physician. If you don't have internet access, you may call Carelink at 609-LINK.

If you do find a physician you are interested in, you can often make an interview appointment to speak with the physician directly. There may be a small fee for the office visit, but the peace of mind in choosing a good personal physician is more than worth it.

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