

UW Medicine and you: healthier together

By Peter McGough, M.D.

You probably paint your house and change your car's oil on a regular schedule. The same should be true for your healthcare.

UW Medicine encourages you to see your primary care provider (PCP) at recommended intervals so the doctor can monitor your health status, make timely treatment adjustments, suggest preventive services and connect you with the right specialist when needed.

A significant benefit of your affiliation with a UW Medicine PCP is access (often without a ferry trip) to some of the nation's premier specialists. Your provider can do an electronic consult with hematologists, rheumatologists, dermatologists, and other medical specialists, and get answers back about your care within a day.

"That's a care innovation that not too many healthcare systems are doing. It's a big advantage to the care we're bringing to the Islands," says Peter McGough M.D., medical director for UW Neighborhood Clinics.

Dr. McGough cites another benefit. To prevent gaps in care, UW Medicine PCPs are given electronic reminders – built into a patient's medical record – that prompt them to offer patients additional educational support materials developed by the American Heart Association and other medical organizations.

These healthcare advances can help you only if you maintain regular contact with your provider, either in person or via online secure messaging through our patient portal. This is especially important for individuals with heart disease, diabetes and other chronic health challenges.

Patients with diabetes, Dr. McGough notes, should be seen two or three times a year because conditions can change drastically, and the complications – blindness, kidney failure or loss of limbs – can be severe unless identified early. Through regular interactions "we can significantly improve how patients do with their conditions, directly reducing complications and improving the quality and length of their lives."

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