



An introduction to Advanced Practice Clinicians (APCs)

Get the care you expect and deserve from one of our experienced advanced practice clinicians



You may be seen by an advanced practice clinician (APC). An APC may be a nurse practitioner (NP) or a physician assistant (PA). Both of these medical providers have advanced medical training and work closely with your medical care team to provide the care you need, when you need it.

Nurse practitioner (NP)

A nurse practitioner is a registered nurse (RN) with advanced education and clinical training.

- Practices independently or in collaboration with a medical doctor
- Provides a wide range of health care services. These include performing physical exams, diagnosing and treating illnesses, prescribing medication and ordering lab tests. Nurse practitioners focus on health promotion, disease prevention, health education and counseling.

NP education and credentials

- Graduate degree (master's or doctoral) with preparation in the nurse practitioner role and at least one specialty
- National board certification in acute care, adult, family, gerontology, neonatal, oncology, pediatric, psychiatric or women's health specialties
- Major certifying agencies:
 - American Association of Nurse Practitioners
 - American Nurses Credentialing Center

NP continuing education requirements

- NP state license renewal required every 2 years
 - Completion of 30 continuing education (CE) credits.
- Recertification required every 5 years
 - Completion of recertification exam or clinical practice and credits
 - Minimum 1,000 hours of clinical practice in specialty area and 75 contact hours of CE credits in a specialty
 - Pharmacology credits required for some recertification
- Eligible for certification as Medicare and Medicaid providers

Physician assistant (PA)

A physician assistant has advanced education and clinical training with a focus on the medical aspects of health care.

- Licensed to practice medicine under supervision of a doctor
- Takes medical history, conducts physical exams, diagnoses and treats illnesses, orders and interpret tests, counsels on preventive care, assists in surgery, prescribes medication, makes rounds in hospitals and nursing homes

PA education and credentials

- Graduate degree (master's or doctoral)
- Successful completion of an accredited physician assistant program
- Major certifying agencies:
 - National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants

PA continuing education requirements

- Recertification required every 2 years
 - Completion of 100 continuing medical education (CME) credits
- Completion of recertification exam required every 10 years
- Eligible for certification as Medicare and Medicaid providers

Optum provides patient-centered, comprehensive primary care, specialty care, urgent care and hospice services.

If you have questions about your doctor or advanced practice clinician, please speak with our care team.

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