

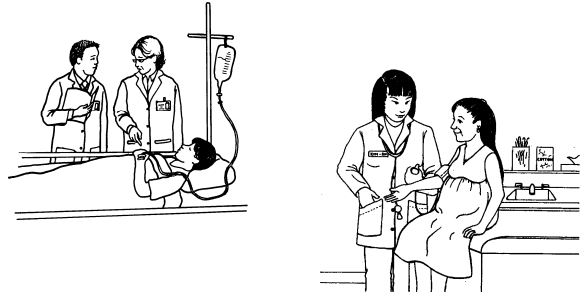
Getting The Health Care You Need

You can make good decisions about your health and your family's health. To make good health decisions, you need to know the following:

- what different health professionals do, and
- where to get health care.

Health Professionals

People who provide health care services are called *health professionals*. They work in *hospitals, clinics,* and offices. Some health professionals are:



- *Doctors/Physicians.* Doctors *examine you, diagnose your problems, treat you, and prescribe medication.* Doctors supervise other health professionals as they treat *patients*. Some doctors also do *surgery* or *operations*. Some doctors treat only certain patients, such as men, women, or children. Some doctors are *specialists* who treat certain parts of the body. For example, if you have a problem with your foot, you might go to a foot specialist.
- *Physician assistants.* Physician assistants help doctors treat more patients by doing some of the same jobs that doctors do. They can examine you, diagnose your problems, treat you, and prescribe some medications. Physician assistants must be supervised by a doctor.
- *Nurse practitioners.* Nurse practitioners may work on their own or with a doctor. Nurse practitioners do many jobs that doctors and nurses do. They may examine you, diagnose your problems, treat you, and prescribe medication for common problems.
- *Nurses.* Nurses may check *weight, pulse, and blood pressure* before you see the doctor. They often write down your medical history or problems for the doctor. After you see the doctor, nurses may give you *shots* or do *tests*.
- *Paramedics or EMTs* (emergency medical technicians). You can call paramedics or EMTs in an *emergency*. They usually treat you in your home and then take you to the hospital in an *ambulance*.
- *Pharmacists.* Pharmacists work in *pharmacies* to prepare medicines. Pharmacists fill your *prescriptions* and answer questions about medications. Pharmacists also give written information about medication, diseases, and preventive health care.
- *Dentists.* Dentists are doctors who examine your *teeth, gums, and tongue*. They treat problems in your *mouth*. Dentists can also prescribe medication. Some dentists also do oral surgery or operations in your mouth.
- *Dental hygienists/dental assistants.* Dental hygienists or dental assistants help dentists. They may take *x-rays* and clean teeth. They can also show you how to keep your teeth healthy.