

## What is Geriatrics?

### Caring for Older Adults

Older adults have special healthcare needs that can make their medical care more complicated. More than half of adults age 65 and older have 3 or more medical problems, such as heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, Alzheimer's disease, or high blood pressure.

Caring for older people with multiple health problems can be tricky, even for healthcare professionals who specialize in **GERIATRICS**, the medical care of older adults.

For example, prescribing medications for a patient with multiple health problems is more complex. A drug that might be useful in treating one health problem can make another problem worse, and taking multiple medications can cause problematic drug interactions and side effects.



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### Who Provides Geriatric Care?

A **GERIATRICIAN** is a doctor who is specially trained to evaluate and manage the unique healthcare needs and treatment preferences of older people.

Geriatricians are board-certified internists or family physicians who have additional training and certification in geriatrics.

Other healthcare professionals, such as nurses, social workers, pharmacists and physical therapists, can also have advanced training in geriatrics.

Because of their special training, geriatricians typically provide care for frail older people who have the most complicated medical and social problems.



## Geriatrics: The Team Approach

Geriatrics is known for its team approach to caring for older people and supporting their families and other caregivers. The geriatrics care team may include but not be limited to any or all of the following professionals:

- Geriatrician
- Nurse
- Physician assistant
- Social worker
- Consultant pharmacist
- Nutritionist
- Physical therapist
- Occupational therapist
- Speech and hearing specialist
- Geriatric psychiatrist

These professionals evaluate the older person's medical, social, emotional, and other needs.

The team also focuses on health concerns common in older people such as incontinence, falls, memory problems, and managing multiple chronic conditions and medications.

The geriatrics team:

- Evaluates the patient's social supports and living situation
- Considers the person's ability to perform daily activities such as bathing, dressing and eating
- Gives special attention to patient preferences and values in care planning

## Do I Need a Geriatrician?

A geriatrician should be consulted when:

- An older person's condition causes considerable impairment and frailty. These patients tend to be over the age of 75 and have a number of diseases and disabilities, including cognitive (memory) problems.
- Family members and friends are under considerable stress as caregivers.
- Family members and patients have trouble following complex treatments, or dealing with many healthcare professionals for their multiple health problems.

## How Can I Find a Geriatrics Healthcare Professional?

Visit [Healthinaging.org](http://Healthinaging.org) and click on "Find a Geriatrics Healthcare Professional" to get an instant list of healthcare providers in your area who are trained in the special healthcare needs of older adults.

**Search by city, state, or zip code!**

Or call 800-563-4916 to have a list mailed to you.



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From the Office of:

Phone Number:

Patient Name:

Notes:

Your Next Appointment: