



# How Healthy Is Your Relationship With Your Primary Care Doctor?

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She had been tired for longer than she could remember.

A woman in her early forties, she came to me after seeing three different doctors in a single year. At each visit, she described the same thing: a fatigue that had settled so deeply into her body it had become part of her. She woke exhausted. She moved through her days as if underwater. She gained weight despite eating less. Each time, she was told her labs were normal. Each time, she was sent home with nothing but the quiet implication that the problem was hers to solve.

*Lose weight, they told her. Exercise more.*

She did. It made no difference. So she sought a second opinion. Then a third. No one could explain what she already knew in her bones: something had changed.

**The problem was never her body. The problem was that no one had been holding the thread.**

When I reviewed her history, I saw what had been missed. Years earlier, her thyroid levels had begun to drift. The shift was subtle, still within the reference range, but it was there. Relevant testing was never ordered. No one followed up. No one compared where she was to where she had been. Her story was written across years of records, but no one had read it as a single narrative.

I ordered the appropriate labs. The results confirmed what her history suggested: what had once been normal for her was no longer normal. We started her on a low dose of thyroid support. Six weeks later, she told me she felt like herself again. She said it quietly, as if she had forgotten that feeling was possible.

## **What Good Primary Care Looks Like**

Primary care, at its best, is not a series of transactions. It is a relationship. One built over time, grounded in trust, sustained by attention.

It means having a physician who knows you. Who tracks your health not visit to visit, but year to year. Who notices when something shifts before it announces itself as a crisis. Who holds the thread of your story even when you lose sight of it yourself.

That kind of care requires something specific: continuity. The same physician, visit after visit. Enough time to listen. A practice structured around knowing patients deeply rather than cycling through as many as possible.

Not everyone has access to this. But it exists. And when you experience it, you feel the difference immediately.

## Why This Matters Clinically

The research is unambiguous.

Patients who see the same primary care physician over time have fewer emergency room visits. They are hospitalized less often. They live longer. The effect is significant, consistent, and observed across every population studied.

The reason is not complicated. A physician who knows you can perceive things a stranger cannot.

They notice when your blood pressure, though still within range, has been climbing for three years. They remember that your father had a heart attack at fifty-two. They recognize that the fatigue you mention, almost as an afterthought, is new for you. They see the pattern forming before it becomes a diagnosis.

A physician who knows your history can often address what might otherwise require a specialist. When a referral is needed, it is made with purpose, and you arrive with your story intact.

**This is not intuition. It is medicine practiced with memory, attention, and time.**

## Three Kinds of Primary Care

When patients describe their experiences, their stories tend to fall into three patterns. Read each one. Notice which feels most familiar.

### 1. Continuity-Driven Care

This is what primary care is supposed to be. A physician who knows your history, your family, the texture of your daily life. Someone who tracks your health over years and catches changes before they become problems. A partner who does not simply manage symptoms, but manages trajectory.

- ☐ You see the same physician at every visit
- ☐ Your doctor remembers your life without consulting the chart
- ☐ You can get an appointment within days, not weeks
- ☐ You have a direct line to your physician
- ☐ Your labs are compared to previous years, not just reference ranges
- ☐ Your family history has actively shaped your care plan
- ☐ You feel comfortable raising concerns that seem minor or vague
- ☐ Your care feels coordinated, not fragmented

### 2. Capacity-Limited Care

Your doctor is skilled and well-intentioned, but stretched impossibly thin. Visits feel rushed. Follow-up slips through the cracks. You sense that your doctor cares, but there is not enough time to show it. The relationship exists in spirit, but not in structure.

- ☐ Appointments take weeks to schedule
- ☐ Visits feel rushed or cut short
- ☐ You see different providers each time
- ☐ You find yourself reminding your doctor of your own history
- ☐ Phone calls go to a general line, never directly to your doctor
- ☐ Lab results arrive with little context or explanation
- ☐ You leave with questions you did not get to ask
- ☐ Prevention is mentioned but rarely acted upon

### 3. Misaligned Care

Sometimes the fit is simply wrong. Communication breaks down. You feel dismissed, unheard, or reduced to a number in a queue. Trust erodes. This is not always anyone's fault. But it is always worth addressing.

- ☐ You dread appointments

- ☐ Your concerns are minimized or dismissed
- ☐ You feel talked at rather than listened to
- ☐ Your questions are treated as inconveniences
- ☐ You leave feeling worse than when you arrived
- ☐ You have stopped mentioning things that bother you
- ☐ You do not trust the advice you receive
- ☐ You have thought about leaving but have not found an alternative

## What This Tells You

Look at the three lists. Which one describes your current situation?

If you checked mostly items in the first category, you have something rare and valuable. **Protect it.**

If you checked mostly items in the second or third, you are not alone. Many people find themselves in that position. Not because they did anything wrong, but because the system was never designed to hold them.

**It does not have to stay that way.**

## What You Can Do

### **If you want to strengthen your current relationship**

Ask for longer appointments. Bring a written list of what concerns you. Request that you see the same physician each time. Ask your doctor directly: "What patterns are you tracking in my health?"

A good physician will welcome the question. If yours cannot, or will not, make room for you in these ways, that is important information.

### **If you are ready for something different**

Look for practices that intentionally limit their patient panels. Ask about response times. Ask about direct access. Find out whether the physician does their own follow-up or delegates it. Ask how they approach prevention, and whether they track your health across years, not just visits.

**The answers will tell you everything.**

## How Sankofa Family Medicine Works

I keep my patient panel small. This is not a limitation. It is a choice.

It means I have time to know you. Not just your diagnoses, but your life. It means same-week appointments when you need them. It means I do my own follow-up and review my own labs. It means I remember your story without relying on a chart to remind me.

I offer virtual visits when coming in is unnecessary, and direct communication when you need a quick answer. I track trends across years. I factor in your family history, your circumstances, your goals. I hold the full context of who you are.

The name *Sankofa* comes from the Akan people of Ghana. It means "go back and get it." The symbol is a bird reaching backward to retrieve an egg from its own past. It is a reminder that understanding where you have been is essential to knowing where you are going.

**That is how I practice medicine. Your history is not paperwork. It is the foundation of your care.**

## A Note on Fit

This model is not for everyone.

It works best for people who value continuity, clarity, and long-term thinking. People who want a physician who genuinely knows them. People who are willing to invest in staying well rather than waiting for something to go wrong.

If you are looking for the fastest or cheapest option, there are many choices. This is not one of them.

**If you are looking for someone who will hold the thread, it is.**

## A Conversation

If you are ready to be remembered in your care, I would welcome the chance to begin that conversation.

The first conversation is simple. You tell me what you are looking for. I explain how I practice. Together, we decide if it is the right fit.

No pressure. No obligation. Just a conversation.

If you are ready to become a patient, you can register directly at [sankofafamilymedicine.com](https://sankofafamilymedicine.com).

If you would prefer to talk first, you can reach me directly:

Phone: (425) 285-7390

Email: [info@sankofafamilymedicine.com](mailto:info@sankofafamilymedicine.com)

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