

WOMEN'S DIRECT ACCESS

Must health care carriers insure that female patients have direct access to timely and appropriate covered women's health care services from certain types of health care providers of their choice?

Yes. Health care carriers, policies, plans, and programs must provide women patients with direct access to certain types of health care providers of their choice for appropriate covered women's health care services without the necessity of prior referral from another type of health care provider.¹ Health care carriers, however, may restrict women patients to seeing only health care providers who have signed participating agreements with the health care carrier.²

What are the types of health care providers to which health care carriers must allow female patients direct access?

The types of health care providers to which female patients are entitled direct access include the following, consistent with their lawful scopes of practice:³

- Physicians who provide women's health care services.
- Osteopathic physicians who provide women's health care services.
- Physician's assistants when providing women's health care services.
- Osteopathic physician's assistants when providing women's health care services.
- Advanced registered nurse practitioners in women's health and midwifery.
- Licensed midwives.

What do women's health care services include for purposes of direct access?

Women's health care services include:⁴

- Maternity care.
- Reproductive health services.
- Gynecological care.
- General examination.

¹ RCW 48.42.100(4).

² RCW 48.42.100(5)(c).

³ RCW 48.42.100(2).

⁴ RCW 48.42.100(3).

- Preventative care as medically appropriate.
- Medically appropriate follow-up visits for any of the above services.