



More equals better? Not when it comes to your health

When most of us think of health care, we think of healing. But not all health care improves health.

Nearly half of primary care physicians say their own patients get too much medical care. And all that unnecessary care is not helping people live better or longer, according to researchers at Dartmouth College.

Receiving more treatment won't help

From state to state and county to county, there are tremendous variations in the way people with serious illnesses are treated. Some regions use two or three times the medical and financial resources of others.

And patients who receive the most aggressive medical care don't necessarily live longer or enjoy a better quality of life than those who receive more conservative treatment. In fact, they often have more complications, spend more money and are less satisfied with their care.

Why does unnecessary care happen? Dartmouth researchers found multiple reasons: Doctors don't always have all the information they need on what constitutes the "right" amount of health care; most doctors are paid per test, visit or procedure; and ... many times, you, the patient, request it.

That combination creates challenges in the delivery of appropriate health care. But many groups are working together to reverse the course.

Many resources to help

A critical change needed in the health care system is to reduce the overuse of unnecessary tests and procedures. *Choosing Wisely*[®], an initiative led by the ABIM Foundation in partnership with Consumer Reports, is one of several efforts by patients, physicians and other health care stakeholders to improve communications, focus on the appropriate treatments and get people healthier.

From understanding the recommended tests for your age and gender to complicated issues like knowing how to navigate through the health care system, the resources developed by medical specialty societies as part of *Choosing Wisely* can help you have better conversations with your physician, which in turn can lead to better health.

Change happens when you know more about your care. So start today. [Here are five things in health care you may not need:](#)

1. EKGs and exercise stress tests for heart disease
2. Imaging tests for lower-back pain
3. CT scans and MRIs for headaches
4. Bone-density scans for low-risk women
5. Antibiotics for sinusitis



[Read the full article](#) to find out the risks, the costs and how to determine whether you really need it.

To read more on these topics, read Consumer Reports' [Too much treatment?](#) and [When to say "Whoa!" to doctors.](#)

This article is part of a toolkit that supports the Choosing Wisely® campaign, an initiative of the ABIM Foundation in partnership with Consumer Reports to help patients and physicians have conversations about health. The articles, tip sheets and links in the series will provide helpful information on everything from coping with serious illness, to preventive care, to the do's and don'ts of common tests. For more information, see [the rest of the series](#) and all the [Choosing Wisely resources from Consumer Reports](#).