



Family Physicians: The foundation of Canada's health care system

Comprehensive medical care

Family physicians are the first point of contact with the health care system for patients across Canada.

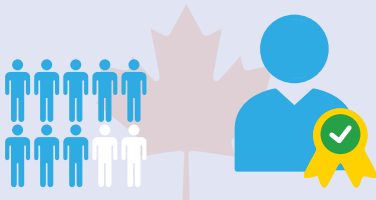
17 OUT OF **20**
people in Canada have a family doctor.¹



Family doctors build long-term relationships with patients to provide holistic, patient-centred care. They play a crucial role in health promotion and illness prevention.²

8 out of 10 Canadians rate the overall quality of care they receive from their family doctors as excellent or good.

8 OUT OF **10**



Family physicians provide care that responds to the needs of the communities they serve. Their medical expertise and rigorous training allow them to work in different settings, including:

- Community-based clinics
- Long-term care facilities
- Hospitals and emergency departments
- Home visits³

Canadian seniors rate their experiences with family physicians **higher** than the international average in terms of the doctors:

- **Knowing their medical history**
- **Spending enough time with them**
- **Explaining things clearly and encouraging questions**
- **Creating collaborative treatment or care plans³**

14% of family doctors work in rural and remote communities, often serving as crucial providers of services such as anesthesia, emergency medicine, palliative care, mental health, and maternity care.^{4,5}

Family physicians complete **5+ years of accredited medical education and training** before practising independently.

When patients have questions about health issues that they consider to be serious, they are most comfortable consulting their family physicians.⁶

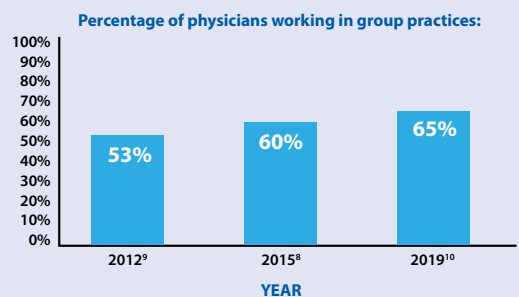
Adding one primary care physician per 10,000 people was associated with a 6% decrease in all-cause mortality.⁷

1% increase in the proportion of primary care physicians was associated with following changes per 1,000 people per year:

- **0.65** fewer in-patient admissions
- **8.15** fewer outpatient visits
- **0.66** fewer surgeries
- **3.83** fewer emergency department visits⁸

Collaborative care

Family physicians collaborate with other health care providers in interprofessional teams to deliver high-quality care.



Eight out of 10 Canadian seniors surveyed say their family **doctors play a key role in both providing and coordinating care** with other health professionals.⁴

Eight out of 10 Ontario Family Health Team patients surveyed said they would probably or definitely be able to get same-day appointments, contributing to high satisfaction among patients and physicians.¹⁰



Access

- A growing majority of family care practices in Canada offer **evening and weekend appointments**.⁴
- **69%** primary care practices in Quebec offer after-hour (6 p.m. onward) appointments to patients on weeknights at least once a week and 61% offer **weekend appointments at least once a month**.⁴
- Family physicians work an average of **48 hours** and provide 25 additional on-call hours per week.¹¹
- **97% of patients** reported that access to team-based care through telemedicine made them hopeful that their **chronic conditions would improve**.¹²



Integrated care

Family practices serve as a hub, connecting patients to necessary services in the health care system and in the community. Team members play an important role in coordinating care and advocating on behalf of their patients.

- The importance of connections between family practices and community and social services is increasing, with 60% of Canadian family physicians screening their patients for social needs.⁴
- An ever-growing number of family physicians (86%) are using electronic medical records (EMRs) in their practices.⁴ EMR use is associated with numerous benefits, such as enhanced screening rates, better communication between team members, and improvements in test result follow-up.¹³
- Patients receiving care from family physicians working with interprofessional teams reported fewer:
 - **Emergency department visits** (35% of patients)
 - **Hospital admissions** (30% of patients)
 - **Appointments with other specialists** (17% of patients)¹⁴

- This relieves pressure on crucial system resources, making them more readily available.
- In a British Columbia survey, patients who visit their family physicians regularly report a higher satisfaction rating of the health care system (average rating 7.5 out of 10) compared with those who access care at walk-in clinics (average rating 6.5 out of 10).¹⁵

Reduced system costs

- Primary Care Networks, featuring family physicians-led clinics, **saved Alberta's health care system \$120 million over the past 10 years**.¹⁶



- Patients with strong attachments to family physicians have fewer emergency department visits and hospitalizations:
 - Patients receiving care for diabetes from family physicians affiliated with Primary Care Networks in Alberta reported an 18 per cent reduction in the rate of avoidable emergency department visits.¹⁷
 - In a Fraser Health study in British Columbia, connecting vulnerable patients to family doctors resulted in 150 fewer emergency visits and 1,634 fewer acute care bed days between August 2014 and June 2016.¹⁸



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