

How we work with your primary care physician

In most cases, you will still need a general internist or other primary care physician for non-GI tract-related medical care, although some gastroenterologists maintain a general internal medicine practice as well as their subspecialty. If you have been referred by your primary care physician to a gastroenterologist, you will probably be referred back to your primary physician for followup care. If you require continuing care for GI-related conditions, your primary care physician and your gastroenterologist, working together, will recommend to you which physician you should see. Be sure to ask your gastroenterologist or referring physician if you have any questions about how your physicians are working together.



Other subspecialties of internal medicine

Our focus on the GI tract is similar to the focus of other internal medicine subspecialties concerned with specific organs or conditions and diseases. Other subspecialties include cardiology (heart), pulmonology (lungs), nephrology (kidneys), rheumatology (arthritis), hematology (blood), hepatology (liver), oncology (cancer), endocrinology (diabetes and other glandular disorders), infectious diseases, allergy and immunology, sports medicine, geriatrics, and adolescent medicine.

Clearing up some confusion

We doctors of internal medicine are also known as “internists.”

This should not be confused with “interns,” who are doctors in their first year of training after medical school.

Nor are we the same as “general practitioners” (GPs), or “family physicians” (FPs), whose practices may include surgery, obstetrics and pediatrics, and whose training is not solely concentrated on adults.

A public education publication from the
American College of Physicians —
American Society of Internal Medicine
(ACP—ASIM)*
representing

115,000 doctors of internal medicine and medical students.

190 N. Independence Mall West
Philadelphia, PA 19106-1572
Telephone toll-free 800 523 1546, ext. 2600
www.doctorsforadults.com

*With support from the American Board of Internal Medicine Foundation. 700100200

GASTROENTEROLOGY
INTERNAL MEDICINE
DOCTORS FOR ADULTS™

Your Internist is a Gastroenterologist



We specialize in the GI tract

Gastroenterology is the subspecialty of internal medicine concerned with disorders and conditions of the gastrointestinal (“GI”) tract, also called the digestive tract. More specifically, gastroenterologists are concerned with the esophagus, stomach, small and large intestines (colon), pancreas and liver.

We gastroenterologists must first complete seven or more years of medical school and postgraduate training and attain Board Certification in Internal Medicine.* Then, for an additional two to three years, we study conditions specific to the GI tract.



We're experts in adults

As internists and gastroenterologists we focus on adults. Our role is to prevent, diagnose and treat conditions and disorders of the GI tract in adult patients. But as broadly trained internists, we may also perform a general physical check-up. After consultation with the referring internist, if a condition is found that falls within gastroenterology, we will provide the treatment. If it requires the services of another physician, we will refer you appropriately. Gastroenterologists may perform routine laboratory studies for patients undergoing a complete office examination.

When you need a gastroenterologist

Not everyone who suffers from digestive problems needs a gastroenterologist. Many digestive disturbances are diagnosed and managed well by general internists, surgeons and others. Our skills are most necessary when special knowledge in diagnosis and treatment is required.

Gastroenterologists do not perform surgery. We may, however, perform procedures, such as liver biopsy and examinations of the esophagus, stomach, small and large bowel, through the use of special flexible medical instruments called endoscopes.

If surgery is required, we work with surgeons to select the best operation for a patient and we provide medical care following surgery.



*This specialty can also be achieved following training in pediatrics.