

What are these reports?

These days, we can get ratings on more than cars and toasters. Publicly available reports provide the same kind of information on doctors, hospitals and health plans.

These reports help doctors and hospitals to see how well they perform and to work toward providing better, more consistent care to their patients. They can also help you make better choices about your own care.

Who's reporting?

Several companies are collecting information and assigning scores and rankings. The federal government is also tracking and publishing information on the quality of hospitals, nursing homes and physicians through Healthcare.gov. Some of the most detailed reports available today come from local groups working to improve health care in a particular region. You can find this local information through [Comparing Health Care Quality: A National Directory](#).

What to Keep in Mind

Reports are only one piece of the puzzle.

You need to take many things into account when you choose a doctor or receive care in a hospital. Public reports can tell you how that hospital or group of doctors performs in key areas related to your condition. Remember, though, that this information is gathered over time from hundreds and thousands of patients. It cannot predict your own outcome. All the information can do is help you understand more about the care you get.

Ask questions.

If you look at a report that includes information about your doctor or hospital, and you have questions, make sure to ask them. They are on your team. They are the best source of information about your care.

What are they measuring?

Reports can include two major types of information:

Information from consumers. These reports show patients' thoughts and opinions about their health care experiences. For example, most major hospitals conduct surveys to let patients rate the care they got at the hospital and say whether they would recommend it to others.

Information from clinical records and insurance claims. These reports show how many patients got the right care at the right time based on the latest scientific evidence. For example, one item looked at for hospital care for a heart attack is whether or not the patient receives an aspirin within 90 minutes of arrival. That's because evidence shows aspirin after a heart attack can help save lives.

Reports from [local groups](#) are most likely to include information on the quality of care delivered in your community. This information helps you learn about health care in different doctors' offices or clinics. It can help you choose a doctor's office or clinic that is providing the best care for you and your family. It can also help you talk with your doctor or nurse about the care you need. For example, if you have diabetes, you can look at which doctors give the greatest number of their patients with diabetes the blood tests they need.

Where to Look

GetBetterMaine.org

Valuable information on the quality of doctors and hospitals in the state of Maine.

[Comparing Health Care Quality: A National Directory](#).

Detailed information about the quality of care provided by doctors and hospitals in your community.

Healthcare.gov.

National performance reports for hospitals, nursing homes and physicians.