

# What is the AAFP?

The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) represents more than 124,900 physicians and medical students nationwide. The AAFP was [founded in 1947](#) to promote the interests of family physicians and their patients.

## What do family physicians do?

Family physicians are dedicated to treating the whole person. These residency-trained, primary care specialists provide a [wide variety of clinical services](#). They treat babies with ear infections, adolescents with hypertension, adults with depression, and seniors with multiple chronic illnesses. With a focus on [prevention, primary care, and overall care coordination](#), they treat illnesses early and, when necessary, refer their patients to the right specialist and advocate for their care.

## How are family physicians educated and trained?

Following medical school, family physicians complete [a three-year residency program](#) that includes training in pediatrics, obstetrics, gynecology, internal medicine, psychiatry, neurology, surgery, and community medicine. As members of the AAFP, family physicians are required to complete 150 credits of continuing medical education every three years to ensure they remain educated in the most up-to-date medical technologies, research, and techniques.

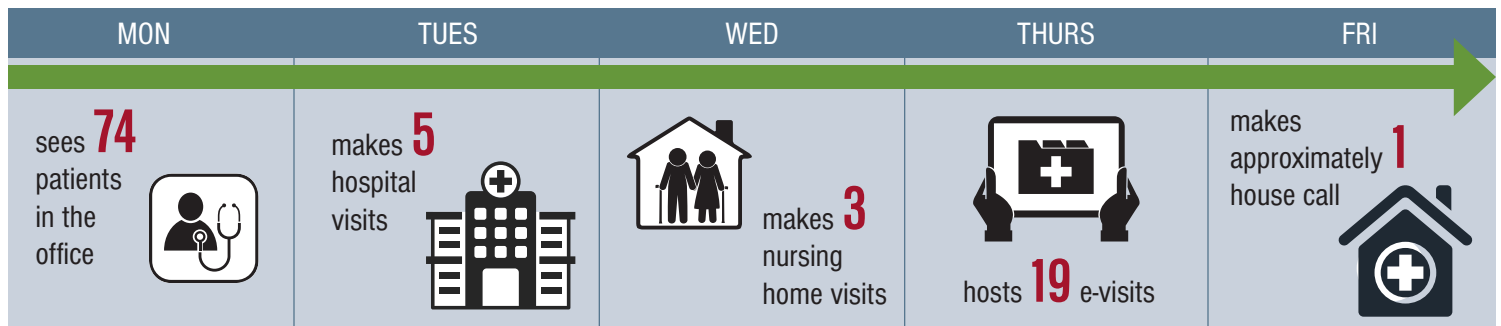
## How many Americans see a family physician?

One out of every five office visits in the United States are made with [family physicians](#). More than 192 million office visits are made to family physicians each year. This is 66 million more than the next largest medical specialty.

## How do family physicians affect the U.S. health care system?

More Americans depend on family physicians than on any other medical specialty. Family physicians are the main source of primary health care for the Medicare population. Approximately [94 percent](#) of AAFP members participate in Medicare, and more than [81 percent](#) of AAFP members accept new Medicare patients. More than [68 percent](#) of AAFP members accept new Medicaid patients.

## In a week, the [average family physician](#):



## Which issues in Congress affect family doctors?

Family physicians treat patients with health issues throughout the lifespan. They provide evidence-based care focused on [prevention](#), [chronic disease](#), [mental health](#), [substance use disorders](#), and [end-of-life](#). As the only medical specialty society devoted solely to [primary care](#), the AAFP is [engaged](#) in virtually all health care issues, including coverage, cost and quality, Medicare, Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), physician payment and delivery system reform, [health information technology](#), funding for family medicine training and primary care research, [medical liability reform](#), and [social determinants of health](#).

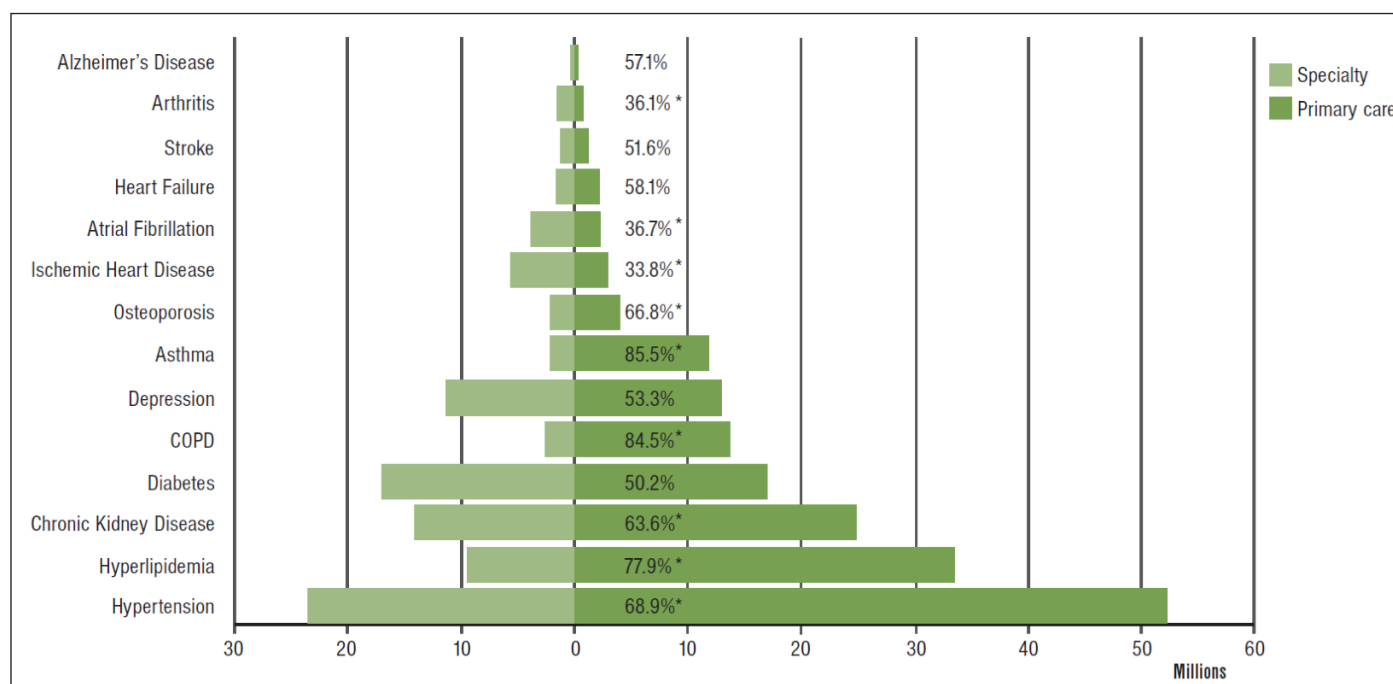
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## How is the AAFP seeking to improve America's health care system?

The AAFP has been at the forefront of efforts to improve the health care system. The AAFP joined with other national medical organizations to test and promote the patient-centered medical home (PCMH) model, which provides a system of comprehensive, coordinated primary care for children, youth, and adults. The PCMH model has the following foundational elements:

- Physician-led practice – Patients have access to a personal physician who leads the care team within a medical practice.
- Whole-person orientation – The care team provides comprehensive care at all stages of life, including acute care, chronic care, preventive services, and end-of-life care.
- Integrated and coordinated care – Practices take steps to ensure that patients receive the care and services they need from the medical neighborhood in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner.
- Focus on quality and safety – Practices use the quality improvement process and evidence-based medicine to continually improve patient outcomes.
- Access – Practices commit to enhancing patients' access to care.

## Patients with high-cost chronic conditions rely more heavily on primary care physicians



Number and percentage of outpatient chronic conditions visits by physician type in the past year, based on the 2008 National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey. \* $P < 0.05$  significant test done by SAS Procedure Surveyfreq Roa-Scotty2 text. COPD, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. *Journal of the American Board of Medicine. January - February 2014 Vol. 27 No. 1*

## Government Relations Division

The AAFP's Government Relations Division stands ready to help you answer questions, provide background information on legislative and regulatory matters, conduct research, or produce geo-spatial mapping resources. We can be reached at (202) 232-9033 or [Capitol@aafp.org](mailto:Capitol@aafp.org).

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