

## **ABOUT INTERNAL MEDICINE\***

### **About Internal Medicine**

Doctors of internal medicine focus on adult medicine and have had special study and training focusing on the prevention and treatment of adult diseases. At least three of their seven or more years of medical school and postgraduate training are dedicated to learning how to prevent, diagnose, and treat diseases that affect adults. Internists are sometimes referred to as the "doctor's doctor," because they are often called upon to act as consultants to other physicians to help solve puzzling diagnostic problems.

### **What's an "internist"?**

Simply put, internists are Doctors of Internal Medicine. Doctors for Adults.® But you may see them referred to by several terms, including "internists," "general internists" and "doctors of internal medicine." But don't mistake them with "interns," who are doctors in their first year of residency training. Although internists may act as primary care physicians, they are not "family physicians," "family practitioners," or "general practitioners," whose training is not solely concentrated on adults and may include surgery, obstetrics and pediatrics.

### **Caring for the whole patient**

Internists are equipped to deal with whatever problem a patient brings -- no matter how common or rare, or how simple or complex. They are specially trained to solve puzzling diagnostic problems and can handle severe chronic illnesses and situations where several different illnesses may strike at the same time. They also bring to patients an understanding of wellness (disease prevention and the promotion of health), women's health, substance abuse, mental health, as well as effective treatment of common problems of the eyes, ears, skin, nervous system and reproductive organs.

### **Caring for you for Life**

In today's complex medical environment, internists take pride in caring for their patients for life -- in the office or clinic, during hospitalization and intensive care, and in nursing homes. When other medical specialists, such as surgeons or obstetricians, are involved, they coordinate their patient's care and manage difficult medical problems associated with that care.

### **Internal medicine subspecialties**

Internists can choose to focus their practice on general internal medicine, or may take additional training to "subspecialize" in [one of 13 areas](#) of internal medicine. [Cardiologists](#), for example, are doctors of internal medicine who subspecialize in diseases of the heart. The training an internist receives to subspecialize in a particular medical area is both broad and deep. Subspecialty training (often called a "fellowship") usually

requires an additional one to three years beyond the standard three year general internal medicine residency.

**What does "internal medicine" mean?**

The term "Internal Medicine" comes from the German term *Innere Medizin*, a discipline popularized in Germany in the late 1800s to describe physicians who combined the science of the laboratory with the care of patients. Many early 20th century American doctors studied medicine in Germany and brought this medical field to the United States. Thus, the name "internal medicine" was adopted. Like many words adopted from other languages, it unfortunately doesn't exactly fit an American meaning.

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