

WHEREVER YOU LIVE

Where you live can affect a lot of things. Your weather. Your commute. And your health care.

For example, **IN 2012:**

People living in **Everett** were more likely to receive a CT scan than the rest of the Puget Sound region. For example, girls aged 5–14 were **134% more likely to get a CT scan** than young girls living in Tacoma.

Women aged 35–44 living in **Puyallup** were **193% more likely to have a hysterectomy** compared to women of the same age living in Seattle.

Men aged 55–64 living in **Renton** were **80% more likely to have spine surgery** than men of the same age living in Seattle.

Women aged 35–44 living in **Olympia** were **239% more likely to receive a spine injection** than women of the same age living in Seattle.

WHAT IT ALL MEANS

Care is delivered differently across the Puget Sound region (and, in fact, across the entire country). Sometimes people get too much care. Sometimes they get too little. And this variation may really affect your health and pocketbook.

THE CAUSE IS NOT ALWAYS CLEAR

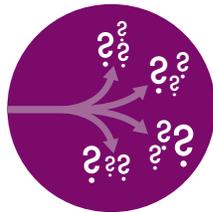
In some places, it could be that people are just sicker. But we also know that the way doctors do things differs across communities and that these differences cannot always be explained by medical need; in some cases, doctors prefer to use certain treatments.*

WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT

Have an open conversation with your doctor. That way, you can help be sure you're getting the care you really need when you need it – not too much and not too little – and that you understand the risks you might face. Having these discussions can help your doctor help you.



Ask your doctor to tell you about all of your care options.



Ask questions about your doctors' recommendations and about any risks or complications.



Find out if a lifestyle change will make a difference. Or, what if you do nothing? This is sometimes called "watchful waiting."



Understand what your treatment options might cost. Be sure to ask about both "professional fees" and "facility fees" which are often billed separately.

Source: *Different Regions, Different Health Care: A Report on Variation in Procedure Rates in Puget Sound*, Washington Health Alliance, 2014.
Learn more at: <http://wahealthalliance.org/alliance-reports-websites/alliance-reports/>.

* Not every doctor will have the same opinion about possible treatments. Factors which may affect a doctor's opinion are technology available to that doctor, school of thought, where they were trained and experience in dealing with that particular diagnosis. Learn more at: <http://www.patientadvocate.org/index.php?p=691>.