Patient First

What it does: Patient First provides urgent, non-life-threatening care as well as primary care through its nine Richmond-area locations. Its clinics also provide on-site lab, X-ray and prescription drug services.

Founded: The initial Patient First location opened in Chesterfield County in 1981.

History: Patient First, originally an urgent-care company, expanded to include more services for patients, including primary care and on-site pharmacies. In its 35-year history, the company has grown throughout the Mid-Atlantic region, with 28 locations in Virginia (including the Richmond region’s nine) and 65 overall. Its 66th clinic will open soon in Maryland.

How the firm has shaped the region: Patient First has added choice and convenience to consumer health care.

“Right now, it seems very simple — we’re all pretty used to it — but back in 1981, the concept was very novel,” said Ian Slinkman, Patient First spokesman.

“It was very unique, because patients no longer had to go to the emergency room if they had an urgent and non-life-threatening medical emergency on the weekends or in the evenings.”

The clinics, open from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day of the year, offer an option to patients who may not be able to get a quick appointment to see their primary care doctor.

“We’re now somewhere in between a regular family doctor’s office and the emergency room,” said Dr. Scott Greenfield, medical director of Patient First’s Midlothian location.

He noted that he frequently works with local ERs to ensure efficiency if a patient needs to be sent there, and he will speak with a patient’s primary care provider if necessary.

A visit to Patient First for an urgent, non-life-threatening condition costs about one-fourth of what a typical hospital ER would charge, Slinkman said.
The company also provides a choice for physicians, who can focus on providing medical care while employed by Patient First rather than the numerous responsibilities associated with owning a practice.

— Katie Demeria