

## Preventative Care for Healthy Living

While your doctor or primary care provider is able to treat you when you are sick, they can also help you take steps to staying healthy and lowering your risk for heart disease, cancer, stroke, and other serious diseases. Depending on your age, medical history, and family history, there are certain steps you can take to stay healthy.

1. Go to your regular doctor or provider for screenings or tests that are used to check your overall health or the health of different parts of your body.
2. Measurements of weight and blood pressure are used by your doctor or provider to talk about your diet and exercise.
3. Talking with your doctor or provider about your use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs and asking about ways to lessen stress and chances of accidents can improve your daily health.
4. Immunizations or vaccine shots for *both* children and adults are also important to prevent getting sick.

## What Preventative Care Services Do You Need?

### Women:

- To keep a healthy weight and blood pressure, an adult woman should have her weight and blood pressure checked by her doctor or provider *at least once a year*.
- At age 21 or once you have had sex, a woman should have a PAP smear/test completed to screen for cervical cancer.
- Between ages 50 and 74, a woman should have a mammogram test *every 2 years* to screen for breast cancer. If a woman has a family history of breast cancer or other risk factors, she may need to have mammograms earlier than age 50 and more often than every 2 years.
- Women 65 years and older, should be tested for osteoporosis or weak bones. If there is a family history of osteoporosis, she should be tested earlier.
- At age 50, a woman should be tested for colorectal cancer or colon cancer by getting a stool test every year and a colonoscopy every 10 years. If you have a family history of colon cancer, eat a diet high in fat, or smoke, your doctor or provider may have you tested earlier.

These tests are done routinely to prevent these diseases. If your doctor gives you these tests, it does not mean that you have a health problem. If you have questions about these tests, you can ask your doctor or provider for more information.

### Men:

- To keep a healthy weight and blood pressure, an adult man should have his weight and blood pressure checked by his doctor or provider *at least once a year*.

- Men ages 35 and older should also have their cholesterol checked *at least once a year*. Cholesterol levels rise as you get older, and high cholesterol can increase your chance of getting heart disease or having a heart attack.
- At age 50, men should be tested for colorectal cancer or colon cancer by getting a stool test every year and a colonoscopy every 10 years. If you have a family history of colon cancer, eat a diet high in fat, or smoke, your doctor or provider may have you tested earlier.

These tests are done routinely to prevent these diseases. If your doctor gives you these tests, it does not mean that you have a health problem. If you have questions about these tests, you can ask your doctor or provider for more information.

### **Children:**

- Shots (also known as vaccines) are the most important step to protect children from many diseases and illnesses.
- Your doctor or provider will make sure that your child is growing and developing correctly and will also tell you how to keep your child's teeth healthy.
- Your doctor or provider may also give you tips on the following topics:
  - How to eat well and exercise
  - How to keep them safe from getting hurt
  - How to stay away from drugs, alcohol, and tobacco

### **Preventative Care steps for feeling and living better**

Taking steps toward being healthy and starting good health habits can prevent you and your family from getting sick or developing diseases later in life. Below are some ways to keep your family healthy:

### **Exercise and a Balanced Diet:**

- Exercise
  - It can help strengthen your bones, heart, and lungs and tone your muscles.
  - It can increase your energy and decrease depression and stress.
  - It can also help you sleep better.
- How to exercise
  - One way to exercise is to increase your heart rate for at least 30 minutes
    - Ex: running, biking, playing sports, or dancing
  - You can also do muscle strengthening activities
    - Ex: lifting weights, yoga, or Pilates
- Depending on your schedule, you could exercise 30 minutes for 5 days a week or 45 to 60 minutes for 3 days a week.

- Along with exercising, you should also create a healthy and balanced diet. This includes choosing foods that are low in saturated and trans fat, and low in cholesterol. You should also eat and use less sugar and salt. Eating more fiber, which can be found in fruits, vegetables, beans, whole grain products, and nuts, are also important for maintaining a healthy diet. Finally, you should work with your provider to determine how many calories your body needs each day and the food size portions that you need.

### **Smoking and Alcohol:**

- Limiting smoking and alcohol usage is also important for staying healthy as cigarette smoking remains the main preventable cause of death in the United States. 1 out of every 5 deaths each year is either directly or indirectly caused by smoking.
- Second hand smoke exposure may cause lung cancer or heart disease in non smokers as well. If you are ready to quit smoking, your provider can discuss medications and programs available to you.
- Like cigarettes, drinking alcohol can also be dangerous. It can change many brain functions and affect your emotions, thinking, and judgment. Continuous drinking will affect your motor skills and cause slurred speech, slower reactions, and poor balance.
- Over time, you may also develop a physical dependence on alcohol, which means that your body will need more and more alcohol before you feel drunk.
- Drinking too much alcohol can lead to diseases, such as the liver and pancreas diseases, cancer, heart muscle damage, and brain damage.
- Women should never drink alcohol when they are pregnant because alcohol can cause serious harm to the unborn baby.

### **Stress:**

- Too much stress can also cause health problems, such as trouble sleeping, upset stomach, anxiety, and mood changes.
- You can manage your stress by recognizing what causes you stress and discovering ways to manage them during those moments. Most people find it helpful to cope with stress by learning and practicing healthy, fun activities, such as doing yoga, meditation, or taking walks.

**Dental Health:** Finally, taking proper steps to maintain healthy teeth is an important part of preventative care.

- Tooth decay and gum disease are caused by plaque, a sticky combination of bacteria and food. If teeth are not cleaned well each day, plaque will harden into tartar and cause tooth decay. Plaque and tartar can lead to a number of health problems including cavities, which are holes that damage the structure of the teeth.
- A gum disease called gingivitis may also occur, which causes your gums to bleed, become swollen, and inflamed. Gingivitis can lead to periodontitis, where the infection leads to the destruction of the soft tissue and bone that support the teeth.

- Also, halitosis or bad breath may occur when dental care is not properly focused.

## Sources

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