



UNDERSTANDING PREVENTIVE CARE

Did You Know? According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 7 out of 10 Americans die each year from chronic diseases, many of which are preventable.

Understanding Preventive Care

Annual preventive care is crucial for overall health. Staying on top of regularly scheduled doctor appointments, screenings, vaccinations, and disease management can make all the difference in catching a health problem in the early stages. This article outlines the difference in necessary preventive screenings amongst females, males, and children and provides a few helpful resources to stay current and in control of one's health.

ADULTS As we age the list of preventive screenings increase. This is to ensure a developing disease is detected and treated prior to becoming unmanageable. Beginning at the age of 18, adults should undergo these preventive screening exams. Please consult with a doctor to confirm what applies to your health and circumstances.

- Physical exam
- Sexually transmitted disease
- Body mass index
- Blood pressure
- Mental health screening

FEMALES Ask a provider about cervical exams, breast cancer screenings, lipid disorder exams, and colorectal exams.

MALES Ask a provider about lipid disorder exams, colorectal exams, and prostate screenings.



CHILDREN Beginning at a few days old it is recommended that children receive the appropriate screenings and vaccinations to ensure good health. Visit <https://www.healthcare.gov/preventive-care-children/> to review preventive screening requirements for children ages newborn to 17 years old.

RESOURCES Knowing what is recommended and expected at a preventive care visit can be daunting. Try out this calculator found on <https://health.gov/myhealthfinder> to see what a doctor recommends based on age and gender. Make sure to ask questions to stay in charge and maintain good health.

Self-advocating at a preventive exam can make all the difference in early detection. Take a look at this Checkup-Checklist found at <https://www.cdc.gov/family/checkuplist/index.htm> and prepare for an annual exam by doing the four things noted. It is always best to ask questions and speak up if something seems abnormal!



Other Helpful Tips

Read below to learn about the types of care that are generally covered by insurance providers, billing guidelines to be aware of, and the importance of provider care amidst COVID-19.

PREVENTATIVE SERVICES COVERED BY INSURERS

According to Healthcare.gov, most health plans must cover a set of preventive services at no cost to the insured, such as immunizations and screening tests. Services are only covered at no cost when obtained by a provider within the health plan's network. Adult preventive services may include testing blood pressure, cholesterol, mammograms, immunizations, and screening for diabetes. Child preventive services may include well-child checks, hearing, vision, immunizations, and developmental screenings. Visit <https://health.gov/myhealthfinder> to learn more about preventive care.

AVOID SURPRISE BILLING EXPENSES It is important to be aware of what is covered as preventive care to avoid surprise billing expenses. Once the

preventive portion of the visit is complete, oftentimes a patient may have additional questions for the physician that can be unrelated or outside the scope of “preventive services.” Once the conversation turns away from preventive care, it can be billed as a different type of visit and can include out-of-pocket expenses. Addressing non-preventive concerns is important – just be aware these services may be billed differently. Check with your health plan for specific guidelines on what is covered under preventive care at no cost.

DON'T IGNORE OR DELAY HEALTH CARE NEEDS DURING A PANDEMIC

Putting health care on hold during a pandemic can lead to serious health problems in the future, particularly for patients who are due for immunizations or who experience conditions that require monitoring. It is important to identify ways to continue receiving care during unprecedented times. When needed, explore virtual or telehealth options being offered as an alternative to ensure continuity of care.

FROM THE DIETITIAN'S DESK

With Becca Rick, MS, RD



HEALTHY EATING FOR DISEASE PREVENTION

Eating a healthy, well-rounded diet has been found to decrease the risk of many diseases, including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain cancers. Healthy eating for disease prevention does not have to completely overhaul your diet, but rather can consist of small, simple changes to promote a long and healthy life.

WHO SHOULD ENGAGE IN HEALTHY EATING FOR DISEASE PREVENTION?

Everyone! Those who are healthy or have low disease risk can maintain their same level of wellness with healthy eating and exercise. Those who have an existing chronic condition or a higher disease risk can delay further disease progression or risk by following simple recommendations. In addition to receiving a yearly wellness check from a primary care provider, aiming for a diet high in fruit, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins and engaging in enjoyable forms of physical activity can make a major difference in potential disease risk.

WHAT SPECIFIC CHANGES CAN BE MADE?

Since lifestyle-related diseases have components that are out of our control, like genetics or age, it is important to address controllable factors, such as diet, that can reduce disease risk and lead to a happier, healthier life. There are certain foods and nutrients that can be incorporated into a regular diet to help decrease risk of preventable disease. The table below lists where to obtain certain nutrients that are often deficient in the American diet and why they are important for preventative care.

FOOD GROUP	EXAMPLES	BENEFIT
Whole Grains	Whole-wheat bread or pasta, brown rice, quinoa	Improve blood pressure and heart health, maintain steady blood sugar, regulate digestion
Unsaturated Fats	Olive oil, canola oil, fish, nuts, avocado, chia seeds	Reduce risk of type 2 diabetes, improve heart health and cognitive function
Whole fruits and vegetables	Broccoli, spinach, bell peppers, berries, apples	Strengthen immune system, decrease blood pressure and cholesterol, inhibit cancer growth
Lean protein	Fish, poultry, beans, nuts	Reduce risk of cardiovascular disease, improve blood pressure and cholesterol, build strong muscles and bones

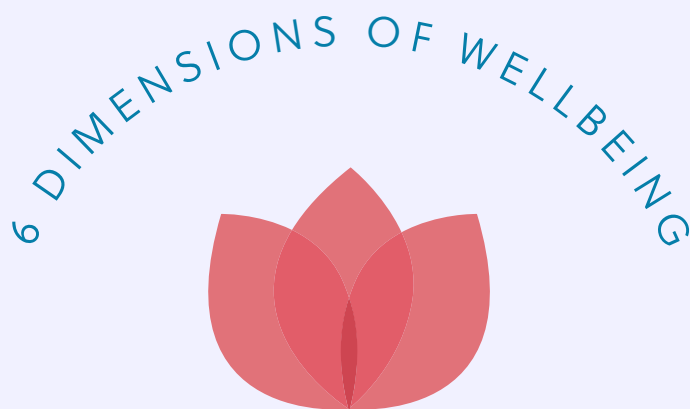
Incorporating these food groups will lead to a more nutritious diet, though the most important aspect is to establish consistent healthy habits over the long-term.

References

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/fill-up-on-phytochemicals>

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/whole-grains/>

Riserus, U., W.C. Willett, and F.B. Hu, Dietary fats and prevention of type 2 diabetes. *Prog Lipid Res*, 2009. 48(1): p. 44-51.



PREVENTION TODAY KEEPS PROBLEMS AWAY

October is recognized for many health observances, including sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), blindness, spina bifida, lupus, breast cancer, and healthy lungs. This month also includes an annual designation to organize medical information. Take time this month to ensure medical information is all in one place and easy to find.

PHYSICAL: Due to safety concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic, routine office visits for chronic conditions have decreased. It is important to maintain care and take responsibility of your health, particularly for patients who are due for immunizations or who experience conditions that require monitoring. Remind family and friends that preventive visits, screenings, and vaccines, are more important than ever.

INTELLECTUAL: Preventive care screenings are important to detect disease and help individuals access timely treatment when necessary. Preventive care visits also help reduce overall medical expenses. Learn which preventive screenings are recommended for your demographic.

EMOTIONAL: At your next virtual or in-person visit with a primary care doctor, be sure to mention any noticeable changes in mental health that may be affecting day-to-day life. A primary care doctor can identify issues with mental well-being and refer additional resources to support.

SOCIAL: According to the CDC, 8 of 10 COVID-19 deaths reported have been in adults 65 years and older. As appropriate precautions are taken, elderly family members may feel loneliness or isolation during these times. Take time to offer service, give thoughtful notes, and visit outdoors, by phone, or by video call.

ENVIRONMENTAL: It is important to prevent the spread of disease, especially to members of the community that are at a heightened risk. Identify proper precautions to take by knowing how the virus is spread and what steps can be taken to stay safe. Be sure to follow CDC guidelines, such as maintaining physical distance, wearing a mask, and frequent hand washing to avoid spreading disease.

FINANCIAL: Chronic diseases account for a large percentage of annual health care costs each year. Screenings and early detection through preventive visits can help make these diseases more treatable and financially manageable.