



Preventive Health Care

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The Importance of Preventive Health Care

The adage “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” is especially true when applied to health care. But each year, millions of Americans choose to skip routine examinations, allowing preventable diseases to end hundreds of thousands of lives.

Immunizations, vaccines, check-ups, routine physicals—they’re all essential to good health.

What is Preventive Care?

Rather than treating a condition after it has progressed, preventive care focuses on preventing disease and maintaining proper health. Preventive care may include immunizations, vaccines, regular check-ups, routine physicals and colonoscopies.

Treating a disease in its earliest stages can be relatively easy, sometimes requiring little more than a simple prescription. But helping a patient combat the effects of an advanced disease can prove extremely difficult, and sometimes impossible.

Preventive Care is Essential.

When it comes to treating potentially serious conditions, early diagnosis is key. Generally, the earlier you begin treatment for a condition, the greater your chance for a full recovery.

Even if you’re in the best shape of your life, a serious condition with no signs or symptoms may be lurking inside your body. X-rays, blood tests and other routine screening are among the only ways to detect the early warning signs. If a specific condition runs in your family, like colon cancer, it’s even more important that you get screened early and often to keep healthy.

Advances in routine screening procedures have made testing incredibly accurate. For example, a new type of MRI can diagnose heart disease up to 10 years before the patient is at risk for a heart attack. Medical professionals are also better educated about what to look for during routine screening procedures.

Cost of Being Uninsured.

It’s common sense that people who are healthy

spend less money on healthcare. And health insurance companies emphasize preventive care, which helps maintain good overall health. therefore, by helping to keep their members healthy, health insurance companies keep costs low; it makes sense for everybody.

But for many of the uninsured, preventive care services are simply too expensive. After all, a simple visit to the doctor’s office can cost hundreds of dollars without health insurance. many put off seeing a doctor until they’re in extreme pain and forced to visit an emergency room.

Here are a few examples of the cost of being uninsured:

- A 3-day hospital stay - \$27,984
- Burst appendix - \$48,151
- Knee surgery and aftercare - \$48,302

Source: Blue Cross

Glowing Praise for Preventive Care.

Medical professionals across the globe and political icons from both sides of the aisle have spoken out in favor of preventive care.

President Barack Obama has called for expansion of preventive care benefits, arguing that “too little is spent on prevention and public health.” Former Senator John Edwards was quoted in the New England Journal of Medicine as saying “study after study shows that primary and preventive care greatly reduces future health care costs, as well as increasing patients’ health.” Secretary of State Hillary Clinton supports a health initiative that focuses on “wellness, not sickness.” former Governor of Arkansas Mike Huckabee has said preventive care “would save countless lives, pain and suffering by the victims of chronic conditions.”

Source: http://www.insweb.com/health_insurance/preventive_care_health_insurance.htm



An apple a day, helps keep the doctor away.

Regular checkups can help you learn about how to stay healthy.

They can even save your life.





Making Preventive Health Care Work for You

Source: Center for Disability Issues and the Health Professions

Source: National Rehabilitation Hospital

What is Routine Health Screening?

Routine health screening is done to assess your general health and to look for signs of health problems. Your primary care doctor (the doctor you usually go to first when you are sick or need advice about your health) should do a routine health screening when doing a physical exam. These screenings are sometimes called preventive health screenings or check-ups. They include:

- Checkups and tests (for example, to check your weight, blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and to look for signs of cancer and heart disease)
- Immunizations (also called vaccines or shots) such as those for flu and pneumonia
- Assessment of health risks and healthy lifestyle counseling about:
 - the importance of regular exercise
 - diet and eating habits
 - smoking
 - drug use
 - heavy alcohol use
 - birth control

Several national health groups and government agencies make recommendations about which preventive tests and vaccines a person should have and when to get them. Sometimes these recommendations are not consistent. They also may change over time. Be sure to talk with your doctor about which screenings and vaccines are right for you.

Why Are Checkups Important?

Many people avoid going to health care providers and getting routine preventive checkups. They put off doctor visits because they're too much trouble or they fear bad news. Whatever your reasons, avoiding health care visits is not a good idea. In fact, putting off doctor visits can have a negative impact on your health. Many conditions can be successfully treated if found early. You can also work to make lifestyle changes if you know you are at risk for heart disease, osteoporosis, or other health problems.

Take advantage of your physical exam time to talk with your doctor about your health.

What about Vaccines?

Vaccines, also called immunizations or shots, are not just for children! Adults

also need to be vaccinated to protect themselves against serious infectious diseases. Some shots are actually more important for adults than for children.

Vaccines help protect you from diseases. They cause your immune system to develop antibodies. The antibodies can recognize and attack the organism if you are exposed to it. An immunization does not always prevent the disease, but it can reduce the disease's severity and symptoms. Vaccines can also save lives. For example, the flu usually is a mild disease. However, it can be life-threatening in older adults and people with chronic respiratory conditions and other risk factors.

Some recommended vaccines are listed below:

- Chickenpox (varicella)
- Tetanus/diphtheria
- Polio (IPV or OPV)
- Hepatitis A
- Influenza (flu)
- Pneumonia/Pneumococcal Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR)

How Can You Increase Your Odds for a Healthy Life?

You can take steps to increase your odds of living a healthy and long life. Checkups and tests can help find problems early, when they are easier to treat. For example, heart disease is a major killer in this country. To help prevent heart disease, it is useful to know what your risk factors are and to take steps to reduce your risks. It is also important to have routine preventive screenings that can detect signs of heart disease. These screenings include blood pressure and cholesterol checks.

Finding health problems early and making healthy lifestyle changes may save or lengthen your life! Vaccines can help prevent serious diseases, too. Your doctor may also suggest medicines or procedures to help prevent or slow the progress of some health problems. Knowing the facts and talking with your health care providers about them can improve your chances of getting the services you need.

What Are Your Risk Factors?

Your family history and lifestyle may mean that you are at risk for certain health problems. This may mean you need to get certain routine health screening sooner than other people do. It may also mean you need to get screened more often than other people.

Knowing your health risks can help you decide what preventive screenings you need and when you need them. Higher risks mean you may need to be screened at an earlier age and more often than usual.

Taking control of your health with regular preventive services is important for keeping in top physical form throughout life.



Mail Service Pharmacies Can Help You Save Money!

Source: Anthem Blue Cross, Healthy Solutions, 2009 issue 1

If you want to save on prescriptions, check your insurance coverage to see if it includes mail service pharmacy benefits. While you'll still rely on your local pharmacy for short-term prescriptions, like antibiotics, a mail service pharmacy can help you save on long-term (maintenance) prescriptions-like blood pressure, cholesterol, asthma and birth control medications, among others.

HOW MUCH CAN YOU SAVE?

You can often get a three-month supply of medicine by mail service for what you'd typically pay for a month or two's supply at a regular pharmacy. That means you could eliminate four to eight co pays per year to reduce your pharmacy costs, depending on your medication and your specific benefit plan. Plus its delivered right to your door-in bulk-which can help you stay on track with your medications.

"When they're part of a health plan, mail-order pharmacies are a reasonable, convenient, low-cost alternative to getting your prescriptions at a typical pharmacy," says Kevin Schulman, M.D., professor of medicine and business administration at the Duke University Medical Center in Durham, N.C.

BE WARY OF INTERNET OFFERS

When you're trying to save money, those e-mails offering too-good-to-be-true pricing on prescriptions may be tempting. But is it worth the risk? "When it comes to internet pharmacies, the buyer has to beware,"

says Schulman. "You simply don't know what you're getting or where it's coming from."

If you're looking for around-the-clock web convenience, see if your health plan's mail service pharmacy accepts orders or refills online.

To find out more about mail-order pharmacies that might be available to you, talk to your doctor or a representative from your health care plan.



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Are Generic and Brand-Name Drugs Really the Same?

Source: Anthem Blue Cross

YES. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires generics to have the same active ingredients, dosage effectiveness, safety, quality, strength and purity as their brand-name counterparts. They are chemically identical. And both go through the same eight-stage review and approval process.

A generic must be the same as a brand-name drug in how it's taken, its intended use and its performance. Both must be absorbed and used by your body the same way. The only way generics can differ is in color, shape and size. United States trademark laws do not allow a generic to look exactly like its brand-name drug.

WHY DO GENERICS COST LESS?

Generics are cheaper because they're based on existing FDA-approved brand-name drugs and the manufacturer doesn't have to pay as much to research and develop the generic. Plus, they don't advertise generics.

DOES EVERY BRAND-NAME DRUG HAVE A GENERIC COUNTERPART?

No. A generic can only be made after a brand's patent or exclusivity period expires, which is usually 17 years.





California is a Sun Belt state that, for outdoor workers and others, presents a high - risk environment for developing skin cancer.

Protecting Yourself in the Sun

Skin Cancer

Sun exposure at any age can cause skin cancer. Be especially careful in the sun if you burn easily, spend a lot of time outdoors, or have any of the following physical features:

- ☀ Numerous, irregular, or large moles
- ☀ Freckles
- ☀ Fair skin
- ☀ Blond, red, or light brown hair

- ☀ **Limit exposure.** UV rays are most intense between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. If you're unsure about the sun's intensity, take the shadow test: If your shadow is shorter than you, the sun's rays are the day's strongest.

Self-Examination

It's important to examine your body monthly because skin cancers detected early can almost always be cured. The most important warning sign is a spot on the skin that is changing in size, shape or color during a period of 1 month to 1 or 2 years.

Skin cancers often take the following forms:

- ☀ Pale, wax-like, pearly nodules
- ☀ Red, scaly, sharply outlined patches
- ☀ Sores that don't heal
- ☀ Small, mole-like growths-melanoma, the most serious type of skin cancer.

If you find such unusual skin changes, see a health care professional immediately.

Block Out UV Rays

Cover up. Wear tightly-woven clothing that blocks out light.

Use sunscreen. A sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 blocks 93 percent of UV rays. You want to block both UVA and UVB rays to guard against skin cancer. Be sure to follow the application directions on the bottle.

Wear a hat. A wide brim hat (not a baseball cap) is ideal because it protects the neck, ears, eyes, forehead, nose and scalp.

Wear UV-absorbent Shades. Sunglasses don't have to be expensive, but they should block 99 to 100 percent of UVA and UVB radiation.

Source: OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration)

Client Corner



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Ignited is a marketing innovations agency. What's that mean to you? We don't really know yet. That's the thing about innovation. It's unknown. Unprecedented. and it tends to make people a little uncomfortable. but there's no such thing as playing it safe anymore. You could even argue that safe is the new risky. These days, you have to be agile. responsive. willing to experiment, evaluate, optimize and reinvent. Which is why we tend to laugh at what worked last year, welcome what's ahead, and worship the clients with the courage to say, "Yes."



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