6 Refreshers to Get More Out of Your Health Plan

As a PacificSource member, you pay nothing for routine physicals, routine mammograms, immunizations, routine colonoscopies, well-baby care, and more. Plus, there’s no charge for several preventive prescriptions. And that’s just for starters.

PacificSource is always seeking ways to deliver higher quality of care at a lower cost to its members. Whether it’s how you access the care you need when you need it or how to take advantage of the services and resources to be your best self, it can’t hurt to incorporate a few strategies to be a more savvy member:

1. **View your provider as a go-to health champion**

   By establishing a relationship with a primary care provider, or your personal doctor, you’re doing yourself a world of good. Making the effort to select the right doctor means you’ll be more equipped for your health journey through the ages. Your personal provider is not only committed to getting to know you and your health history and goals, but he or she is also part of a larger well-coordinated network of health professionals designed to focus on you. Through regular checkups, screenings, and examinations, your personal care provider guides you toward your healthiest self year after year, and charts the course if faced with a health concern. As you move through life, the relationship with a primary care provider has a way of paying big wellness dividends.

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2. Communicate—because you have options

Communicating regularly with your doctor’s office—and PacificSource customer service—can mean fewer emergency visits, better medication management, and fewer hospital admissions. And for those times when an in-person office visit just doesn’t seem realistic or necessary, ask about on-demand access to doctors by phone or video. There’s also 24-Hour NurseLine, an all-hours free resource to get trusted health information and advice from a nurse. Getting the right kind of care at the right time saves both time and money.

3. Use your preventive care benefits

You’ve probably heard it before, but it’s worth repeating: Regular checkups, shots, and screenings are vital to good health. Your primary care provider can help coordinate which tests and shots are right for you, based on age, gender, and family history. With PacificSource, there’s a $0 copay for the following preventive screenings, including:

- Yearly wellness examinations
- High blood pressure and cholesterol tests
- Diabetes and colon cancer screenings
- Breast exams, mammograms, and PAP tests

4. Ask for generic drugs

It shouldn’t be any surprise, but generic drugs typically cost less than brand-name versions. Generics are approved by the FDA and contain the same active ingredients as brand-name drugs. With a PacificSource preferred pharmacy, the saving on your prescription is often significant.

5. Make the most of wellness programs

Ask us about the no-cost opportunities and discounts to help you quit smoking, assess your health, and be your best self. The Active&Fit Direct™ program provides you with discounted access to a broad network of participating fitness centers. Saving money while improving your health is hard to beat.

Take charge by getting more empowered to:

- Eat a healthy diet
- Get enough sleep
- Increase activity and move more
- Quit smoking and avoid secondhand smoke
- Keep your weight under control

6. Let your opinions be known

Have you recently received a survey asking about your healthcare experience? These follow-up questionnaires can make a difference in the long run. They can be a great way to share what’s going well, and what could be improved. We care about your experience and use the feedback to improve our services.

Ask questions: Information is power

Care that costs more may not mean it’s better. And the cheapest care may not always be the best choice. With every question about your plan and coverage, never hesitate to contact PacificSource. It’s why we’re here. A quick phone call can provide the answers—and helpful insights—that can help you compare cost and quality of care.
How to Keep Your Smile Healthy for a Lifetime

Like all things associated with maintaining good health, needs change as we age. Plus, research shows a link between periodontal (i.e., gum) health and overall systemic health, which includes heart disease, diabetes, stroke, premature births, arthritis, lung disease, breast cancer, and more. Here’s an overview for good dental health at every age:

Pregnancy

It’s important to have a teeth cleaning during pregnancy. Your oral health can affect the health of your growing baby. Aside from brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, and flossing once a day, be vigilant of pregnancy gingivitis. Hormone changes can cause gum swelling, tenderness, or bleeding. More important, don’t skip dentist appointments.

Infants, Toddlers, and Children

Your child’s first dental appointment should be within six months after the first tooth appears, but no later than their first birthday. As a parent, you can help your kids develop healthy dental care habits that will serve them their whole lives. As a parent, remember to lead by example. Let your children see you taking care of your teeth, and make it a positive experience. Begin brushing your child’s teeth twice per day as soon as their teeth start coming in.

Teens

By the time most people reach age 13, they have most or all of their permanent teeth. Healthy habits developed in childhood will be a huge help at this stage. In addition to brushing twice a day, flossing once a day, and seeing the dentist regularly, teens should ask their dental professional about wisdom teeth (i.e., third molars) and braces or orthodontia.

Adults under 40

In our 20s and 30s, life can be crazy busy. Between caring for families and focusing on careers, it can be easy to let dental care take a back seat. Yes, it happens. But brushing twice a day, flossing once a day, and seeing the dentist regularly is crucial for avoiding major dental problems. This is the time in life to be watching out for gum disease (inflammation of the gums), teeth grinding, and misuse of whitening products.

Adults 40-60

The issues and recommendations listed above for younger adults can also apply for the middle-age years. Depending on how well you’ve cared for your teeth up until now, along with other factors, you may also be faced with new concerns, such as sensitivity to hot and cold foods, decay of old fillings, dry mouth, oral cancer, and loss of teeth.

Adults over 60

The repetition may be tiresome, but here it is: brushing, flossing, and seeing your dentist regularly are still the best way to care for your teeth. The challenges to be wary of include how your mouth and gums react to medications (both prescription and over the counter), oral cancer, and maintaining dentures (or other removable appliance that replaces missing teeth).

For more information about dental care at different stages of life, see MouthHealthy.org/en/life-stages. Mouth Healthy is a consumer education site produced by the American Dental Association.

If you’re a PacificSource member with questions about your dental coverage, please call our Dental Customer Service team at (866) 373-7053 or email dental@pacificsource.com.
10 Tips to Keep Your Eye Health in Check

Hindsight may be 20/20, but when it comes to watching out for your eyes, this fact is clear: There’s a lot more to eye health than vision checkups. Here are 10 pointers to optimize eye health:

1. **Open your eyes to optometry.** Early detection of eye diseases increases the likelihood of more effective treatment. Conditions, such as glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration, don’t always have warning signs, but are easily assessed during an eye exam by an ophthalmologist (i.e., eye doctor).

2. **Sport the shades.** The sun’s ultraviolet light rays can damage your eyes, and over time lead to conditions, such as cataracts. When choosing sunglasses, look for lenses that block out 99 to 100 percent of both UV-A and UV-B radiation.

3. **Wear eye protection at work.** If you work with heavy machinery, hazardous chemicals, or any other materials that may damage or irritate your eyes, always wear proper protection.

4. **Give your eyes a break.** Are you blinking enough? When we’re focused and deep in thought, our “blinks per minute” rate drops, which affects the eyes’ ability to self-lubricate and irrigate the cornea with clean, necessary moisture. Next time you’re faced with long stretches of time at your computer or on a tablet, remember to periodically look away from the screen and . . . blink!

5. **Toss out tobacco.** Using tobacco products can disrupt blood flow and nutrient delivery to your eyes, which can lead to vision loss over time.

6. **Keep an eye on your weight.** Being overweight or obese may lead to conditions, such as diabetes or high blood pressure, which contribute to declining vision.

7. **Stop rolling your eyes at healthy foods.** Not only is a smart diet essential to maintaining good eye health, but choices that are rich in vitamin C and beta-carotene (oranges and yellow vegetables, for instance) and omega-3 fatty acids (found in salmon, trout, and tuna) help prevent dry eye, cataracts, glaucoma, and macular degeneration.

8. **Invisible fitness benefits.** As if you need another reason to keep a regular exercise routine, here you go: Staying in shape is good for your eyes. By striving for optimal health, your body is not only better equipped to prevent chronic illness that can lead to poor eye health, but regular exercise can also help ward off conditions, such as eye irritation, light sensitivity, and watery eyes.

9. **Get a handle on your hygiene.** Regularly wash your hands, face, and contact lenses to avoid contact from unwanted bacteria. Plus, it’s just a good idea to keep your paws off your face. Your eyes provide a warm and welcoming place for viruses to enter.

10. **Light up your life.** Get strategic about the lighting in your home or workspace to accommodate the tasks at hand. Light sources that are too low or too bright can cause eye strain.
Top 10 to Ways to Stay Connected

With so many social media channels and mobile apps, staying connected may feel like a default mode—a part of the modern world that takes care of itself. But not so fast. When you consider how important genuine human interaction is to our well-being, it begs the question: Just how connected are we? Here are a few essentials to foster and nurture what matters—to keep it real with genuine connections.

1. Invite friends over, just because.
Take a break from back-lit text and Snapchat filters, and invite a few friends over. Enjoy the spontaneity of a casual hangout, and see where your moods take you, whether it’s an afternoon of catching up over coffee or an impromptu baking session.

2. Write a letter—signed, sealed, delivered.
When was the last time you checked your mail—your real mail, inside a mailbox—and read a letter from a friend or beloved? Taking the time to write and send a letter shows someone you cared enough to pack some extra thought into the relationship. And it sure makes for a nice surprise—and keepsake for the ages.

3. Bust out the board games.
Invite friends, family, or neighbors and bond over some friendly competition. Whether it’s Twister, Go Fish, or Monopoly, you’ll set the stage for good times and lasting memories.

4. Put away the devices.
If you’ve made the effort to meet up in person, make the most of it by being fully present. Put away your phone (and other potential distractions); you’re not only letting people know they matter—you’re better able to be in the moment.

5. Join a club or recreation league.
Whatever your interest may be, go for it. Skills are overrated. The goal is to embrace something new. Taking part in a hobbyist group or playing on a team is a great way to expand the social circle, foster new friendships, and awaken your inner talents.

Check out your local community resources to see what classes are available. Before you know it, you could be whipping up four-course meals, speaking a different language, or bonding over trail maps.
7. Give your time, collect dividends.
Find local organizations that depend on community volunteers. All sorts of groups are dedicated to improving the quality of life for people who might otherwise never cross your path. Volunteering is a rewarding way to give back while expanding your role in the community.

8. Set up distraction-free meal zones.
It’s easy to get into the habit of sharing dinner with the TV on or people with their devices. Instead, make sure dinners have everyone—ready for this?—sitting at the table at the same time with the TV off and devices away. Yes, enjoy a social, fun, tasty meal together.

9. Set a standing date.
Scheduling regular social time with a friend, partner, kiddo, or loved one can help you keep a relationship thriving. Having a standing date with someone you care about prevents you from drifting apart when life gets in the way.

10. Embrace empathy.
Ever sense when someone might be going through a rough patch? Follow your gut. Ask how they’re doing, and really listen. There are times when people just need to be heard or want someone to talk to. Put yourself in the other person’s shoes, and treat them the way you’d want to be treated.

For assistance in a language other than English, please call us at 888-977-9299. For TTY, please call 800-735-2900 or 711.

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Seeing the doctor soon? Make the most of your appointment

Because time with your primary care provider is such an important part of managing a health concern or existing condition, make the most of your appointment by:

- **Being honest.** It’s important that your doctor has a clear understanding of your concerns, symptoms, and questions. Details of what you’re experiencing can impact your treatment plan, so it’s important to be honest. Make sure you discuss over-the-counter medications, supplements, and any current complementary or alternative therapies.

- **Asking questions.** Although talking about your needs with healthcare providers is often easier said than done, it helps to start by asking questions. Never hesitate to ask to clarify whatever you don’t understand—your healthcare providers are there to help.

- **Taking steps to remember.** According to a 2018 study from the Institute for Healthcare Improvement and National National Patient Safety Foundation, 80% of information shared during a primary care visit is immediately forgotten by patients. This serves as a reminder to take notes, ask for printouts, or consider bringing along a friend or recording device.

- **Following up.** Schedule recommended tests, review your test results, fill any prescriptions you may have, and take your medication as directed. Also, ask about the timing for your next appointment.