The Importance of Preventive Care

Preventive care is critical to your overall health. This type of healthcare includes screenings, exams, and immunizations that identify health problems early so you can take action to keep them from becoming chronic conditions. Here’s a look into a few examples of preventive care:

Wellness Visit
This is your annual exam. Your doctor checks your height, weight, heart rate, and blood pressure. A fasting blood draw is often done for this visit as well to check your cholesterol and glucose levels. Think of this as your general maintenance check, and make it a priority.

Immunizations
Kids aren’t the only ones who need vaccinations to help prevent health problems. There are several immunizations recommended for adults, including protection against flu, tetanus, diphtheria, and whooping cough. Talk to your doctor for a recommended immunization schedule.

Colorectal Cancer Screening
This preventive measure is recommended for men and women once they reach age 50. Colonoscopies are standard for this screening; however, potential alternatives may be an option for you. Talk to your doctor to learn more.

Breast Cancer Screening
Mammograms are x-rays of the breasts to look for cancer. Most of the time, women survive breast cancer if it is found and treated early enough. Around age 40, women should start talking to their doctors about when to get their first mammogram. From ages 50 to 74, women are advised to get a mammogram every two years.

Cervical Cancer Screening
This screening for women is also known as a Pap test, which can help find abnormal or changed cervical cells before they become cancerous. It can also find cervical cancer in stages early enough to potentially cure the cancer. Check with your doctor for screening recommendations.

Obesity Screening and Counseling
If you’re trying to achieve a healthy weight, your doctor can provide some guidance. This could include reviewing your body mass index (BMI) with you and identifying other potential health risks.

Type 2 Diabetes Screening
Diabetes can cause many health problems, and once you have diabetes, it can only be managed—not cured. The good news is that it’s preventable. A healthy diet and regular exercise to maintain a healthy weight are essential to diabetes prevention. If you want to know more about your risk and prevention, talk with your doctor.

Depression Screening
Depression is an illness that can affect your thoughts, moods, and activity level. If you think you may be experiencing depression, schedule a medical check-up so you can talk with your doctor about how you’re feeling and decide on the best course of action.

Note: Preventive care services are fully covered only when you receive them from providers in your plan’s network and when they are conducted in-line with your preventive care schedule. If you receive these services from providers who are not in your plan’s network, you will likely be responsible for some or all of the cost. Contact our Customer Service team for more information about your benefits and covered preventive care services.
Ten Tested Tactics to Minimize Stress

High levels of stress are known to wreak havoc on your health, increasing your risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, diabetes, and more. On top of all that, it’s no fun! The good news? While you can’t avoid stress entirely, there are lots of things you can do to minimize its effect on your body and mind. Here are ten actions proven to do just that.

1 Talk It Out
Talking through stress with a trusted listener can help you prioritize and provide insight to problems.

2 Laugh
Jump on YouTube and watch a funny video. Laughter releases hormones such as cortisol, dopac, and epinephrine, which ease stress. It activates and relieves your body’s stress response, improves mood, boosts your immune system, and more. Even anticipating a laugh reduces stress hormones!

3 Schedule Breaks
Breaking up the work day gives your brain time to relax and rejuvenate. Blocking out the time on your calendar helps ensure you won’t skip them.

4 Hang Out with a Dog or Cat
Animals live in the moment, they’re playful, and give unconditional love—all things that can help your stress melt away. Don’t have a pet of your own? Borrow a friend’s or volunteer at an animal shelter.

5 Eat Nutritious Foods
Foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids (such as salmon, broccoli, and walnuts) can boost mood and energy. Skip sugary treats, which can lead to sluggish behavior.

6 Cuddle and Kiss
Touching, kissing, and hugging (or any other affectionate activities) stimulate the brain’s release of the hormone oxytocin, which eases stress.

7 Go Forest Bathing
Popularized in Japan, Shinrin-yoku (forest bathing), has been shown to have positive effects on both physical and mental health. So find a forest (or park) and enjoy the natural sights, scents, sounds, and tactile sensations it has to offer.

8 Make Sleep a Priority
Sleep provides the time the body needs to rest while the brain recovers to maximize productivity, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Adults should aim for eight hours a night.

9 Get Moving
Physical activity gets your blood flowing, which increases energy, sharpens focus, and lifts your moods. Try to fit in 30 minutes—all at once or broken up throughout the day.

10 Keep It Balanced
Having a life outside of work can give you greater support and pleasure, which keeps stress at bay. Make time for hobbies and activities you truly love.

Resources
NCBI: “Brain foods: the effects of nutrients on brain function,” ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2805706
SpringerLink: “Trends in research related to ‘Shinrin-yoku’ (taking in the forest atmosphere or forest bathing) in Japan,” link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12199-009-0091-z
Find Your Fitness Routine

Everyone faces challenges when it comes to making time for fitness. After all, there’s a lot of competing priorities. Establishing a fitness routine is a priority you’ll want to put some effort into. Here are some things to think about as you plan your fitness routine:

**Talk with your doctor.** Your primary care doctor can go over your medical history and any conditions you have to help you plan appropriate fitness options. This is a great way to get input on what types of exercises would be best to help you achieve your health goals and what limitations you need to be aware of.

**Start slow.** If you don’t currently exercise regularly, start slow and work your way into more frequent or intense workouts. Steady progression is important for successful fitness routines so that you continue to get stronger and physically fit, without hurting yourself.

**Plan for obstacles.** Stuff comes up throughout the day that can throw you off track. Have a plan B for when this happens. Keep walking shoes at your desk in case your postwork run gets bumped because of family priorities. That way, you can still sneak in a couple ten-minute walking breaks.

**Mix it up.** Doing the same thing over and over works for some people. However, adding variety is not only good to help you keep your interest in your fitness routine, it’s also a good way to keep your muscles guessing. This will help you continue to get stronger or improve your endurance.

**Try new things.** The fitness world is constantly coming up with new, fun ways to get people moving and stay active. By being open to new ideas and trying new things, you not only get a healthy dose of exercise, but you can also make new friends and enjoy new hobbies.

**Be flexible.** For some people, there’s just no way to set a “routine.” If your day-to-day schedule is constantly changing, you can still fit in some exercise. Think in terms of 10–15 minutes at a time, and think of activities that can be done anywhere. That will be less stressful than trying to carve out a half hour to an hour for a workout.

**Identify fitness activities you will actually do.** Be honest with yourself. If you hate boot camp workouts, don’t try to make them part of your routine. Think of the things that will leave you feeling, “That was awesome. I feel great!”

**Pick your time of day.** There’s a lot of debate about the best time of day to work out. The reality? The best time of day to work out is the time that you will actually stick to. If you’re a morning person, try fitting a workout into your morning routine.

**Make it social.** A lot of people are more likely to stick to a fitness routine if they have a workout buddy. If that sounds like you, set up a routine with your friends or co-workers, or participate in a class—have fun with it!

**Keep it simple.** As nice as it is to have a gym membership and access to different workout machines, you can get a great workout without any equipment. Push your coffee table out of the way and embrace the basics. (There’s a reason why things like squats and push-ups have been recommended bodyweight exercises for decades!) Or, turn up the music and dance!
How Much Do You Know About Fiber?

You may know getting plenty of fiber is important for your health, but do you know why? Or how to get it? Our quiz at right gives you a chance to test your knowledge! So grab a pencil, see how you do, then read more. Your body will thank you!

- Fiber is a nutrient found only in plant foods, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes. Also known as roughage or bulk, it’s a material that includes the parts of plant foods your body can’t digest or absorb.

- The average amount of fiber most people need per day is **20–35 grams**. The optimal amount for you depends on your gender and age:
  - Women age 50 and younger should aim for 25 grams; women age 51 and older need closer to 21 grams.
  - Men age 50 and younger should aim for 38 grams; men age 51 and older need closer to 30 grams.

- A high-fiber diet can help prevent colon cancer, heart disease, and diabetes. And if you need more reasons to pay attention to this powerhouse nutrient, it’s also been shown to lower cholesterol, regulate blood sugar, relieve constipation, help people maintain a healthy weight, and prevent diverticular disease.

- All of the food options listed on the quiz question are high in fiber, but black beans win out. Here are the amounts in each one-cup serving:
  - Black beans: 15 grams
  - Raspberries: 8 grams
  - Whole wheat spaghetti: 6.3 grams
  - Broccoli: 5.1 grams

- There are two types of fiber: water-soluble and water-insoluble, which are both important for different reasons. **Insoluble fiber** attaches to waste in the body, making waste bulkier and easier to pass. **Soluble fiber** slows down the absorption of sugar and fats in the blood and binds with and removes cholesterol from the bloodstream, lowering LDL, or “bad” cholesterol.

- High-fiber foods tend to be more filling than low-fiber foods, so you’re likely to eat less and stay satisfied longer.

- In general, the best way to get fiber is through whole foods rather than fiber supplements. Fiber supplements don’t provide the variety of fibers, vitamins, minerals, and other beneficial nutrients that foods do. And food with added fiber can cause gas for some people.

Resources

- UCSF Medical Center: “Increasing Fiber Intake,” https://www.ucsfhealth.org/education/increasing_fiber_intake/

Test Your Knowledge

1. Fiber is a nutrient found in:
   a. Only plant foods
   b. Plants and some dairy products
   c. Only meat and dairy products
   d. All foods

2. What’s the average amount of fiber most people need per day?
   a. 10–20 grams
   b. 20–35 grams
   c. 40–50 grams
   d. 50–70 grams

3. Getting enough fiber can help prevent:
   a. Colon cancer
   b. Heart disease
   c. Diabetes
   d. All of the above

4. Which food contains the most fiber?
   a. Raspberries
   b. Black beans
   c. Whole wheat spaghetti
   d. Broccoli

5. Which type of fiber is best?
   a. Soluble (absorbs water during digestion)
   b. Insoluble (remains unchanged during digestion)
   c. Optical
   d. A & B—they are both important for different reasons

6. Increasing your fiber intake can:
   a. Lower cholesterol
   b. Regulate blood sugar levels
   c. Help you maintain your weight
   d. All of the above

7. What’s the best way to get fiber?
   a. Supplements
   b. Fiber-fortified foods
   c. Foods that are naturally high in fiber
   d. It doesn’t matter

Answers

1.a  2.b  3.d  4.b  5.d  6.d  7.c
Eating the Rainbow

The bright colors of fruits and vegetables are not only appealing to the eye; they also have fundamental health benefits. There are three main types of pigment that give fruits and vegetable their rich hues:

- Carotenoids (orange and yellow)
- Flavonoids (blue, red, and cream)
- Chlorophyll (green)

These colorful compounds provide health and nutrition benefits. Pack your plate with colorful fruits and veggies, and reap the healthy rewards!

Red
Red fruits and vegetables contain vitamin A (beta carotene) and vitamin C, and are typically high in manganese and fiber. Choose red bell peppers, tomatoes, cherries, cranberries, raspberries, rhubarb, pomegranates, and beets. Red apples also contain quercetin, a compound that seems to fight colds, flu, and allergies.

Orange
Orange fruits and vegetables have a similar vitamin and mineral profile as the red varieties, such as vitamins C, A, and B6, potassium, and fiber. Choose items such as butternut squash, carrots, sweet potatoes, cantaloupes, oranges, pumpkin, orange bell peppers, nectarines, and peaches.

Yellow
Banana is probably the first yellow fruit that comes to mind—and it packs a punch with potassium and fiber. Other nutrients you’ll find in yellow fruits and vegetables include manganese, vitamin A, and magnesium. Think spaghetti squash, summer squash, and yellow bell peppers.

Green
Dark, leafy greens are packed with nutrients. Spinach is rich in lutein, which aids eyesight, and folate, which supports cell reproduction. Other nutrient-dense greens include: avocado, peas, broccoli, asparagus, green grapes, okra, and zucchini.

Blue
Blueberries, containing one of nature’s most powerful antioxidants, are loaded with fiber and make an incredibly versatile addition to your diet. Eat them by the handful, sprinkle them on cereal, or add them to salads for a different and delicious taste.

Purple
This group includes red onions, eggplant, blackberries, Concord grapes, currants, and plums. Purple indicates anthocyanins—powerful antioxidants that protect blood vessels and preserve healthy skin. You can also find vitamin A and flavonoids in purple vegetables such as radicchio, cabbage, potatoes, and carrots.

White
White may not be much of a color, but white vegetables, such as cauliflower, rutabagas, and parsnips, still shine with vitamins C and K, and folate, and they contain fiber. Don’t forget onions and garlic, which contain allicin, and may protect the heart and blood vessels from damage.

Summer is a great season for fresh fruits and veggies. Eat a variety of types and colors of produce in order to give your body the mix of nutrients it needs. Eat a diet rich in fruits and veggies to help:

- Lower blood pressure
- Reduce risk of heart disease and stroke
- Prevent some types of cancer
- Lower risk of eye and digestive problems
- Improve blood sugar levels

Resources

FruitsAndVeggiesMoreMatters.org
Prepare for Flu Season

We may be in the heart of summer, but it won’t be long before fall—the start of flu season. Peak flu season can begin as early as October and last through May. The best time to get a flu shot is September or October. It takes about two weeks for the flu shot to be most effective. Mark your calendar so you’re protected for the upcoming flu season.

What else should I know about flu shots?

- **Flu shots offer valuable protection.** A flu shot doesn’t guarantee you won’t get the flu, but it helps. In fact, it can provide up to 60 percent more protection than if you don’t get one.
- **You don’t get flu from flu shots.** Modern flu vaccines don’t use live viruses, which means you can’t get the flu from a flu shot.
- **Pharmacies offer convenience.** Most offer drop-in flu shots with little or no waiting.
- **If you’re a PacificSource member, you can get a flu shot at no cost to you.** Most of our health plans allow you to get the flu shot at no cost when you get it from provider or pharmacy in your plan’s network.

For more information and to find providers and pharmacies, visit PacificSource.com/flu.