



DDS SafetyNet

For Health, Safety, and a Better Life

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Preventive Health Care – Getting an Annual Checkup

Preventive health care is critical to helping people live longer, healthier lives. Preventive health care starts with an annual checkup. The annual checkup gives the doctor the opportunity to find problems before they start.

Even if a person feels fine, they should still see a doctor at least once a year. People often think they only need to see a doctor if they are sick or have been injured. It is just as important to visit the doctor when they feel well.

At the annual checkup the doctor will:

- **Review** the person's overall health,
- **Answer** questions or concerns,
- **Ask** about eating, exercise and smoking habits, and
- **Recommend** preventive screening tests and vaccinations.

Make sure the person you support has a doctor they know and trust. If the person you support needs a new doctor, help them find one. Go to <http://www.ddssafety.net/health/doctor-visits/finding-doctor> for helpful tips on finding a new doctor.



Things to Do Before, During and After the Check Up

Things to Do Before the Check-Up

Develop a written list of questions and concerns for the doctor: <http://www.ddssafety.net/health/preventive-health/your-list-questions-ask-doctor>.

Talk with the person and their team to learn about any health concerns. Spend time and ask lots of questions. Add any changes in behavior that may be of concern to the list.

Develop a written list of medications for the person. <http://www.ddssafety.net/health/preventive-health/my-medicine-list>.



**Include all medications the person takes.
Include vitamins and other supplements.**

Talk to the person you support about asking the doctor what preventive tests may be needed.

Preventive tests look for health problems before a person has symptoms. The earlier health problems are found, the easier they are to treat. <http://www.ddssafety.net/health/preventive-health/preventive-health-screenings-you-need>.

Talk to the person you support about asking the doctor what vaccines (shots) may be needed.

Different shots protect people from different diseases. For up to date information on recommended vaccinations, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/>.





Preventive Health Care - continued

Talk About What to Expect at the Annual Checkup.

Explain to the person you support what will happen during the visit:

Nurse

A nurse will take their **blood pressure** (to check for high blood pressure) and get their **height and weight** (to check for being overweight or for obesity). The nurse may also ask some health questions.

Doctor

The doctor will do a **physical exam**. The purpose is to check for signs of a health problem. The doctor will ask about any concerns. This is the time for the individual to get questions answered. Make sure the person is OK asking all the questions. You may want to practice together ahead of time.

Ask the person what support they will need at the checkup. *Some individuals will want you to go with them to help to **ask questions** and **take notes**. Others may want to go to the checkup on their own. In all situations, be sure the person is prepared.*

At the Checkup

Give the doctor copies of the person's lists of questions and concerns, and medications.

Make sure ALL the questions get asked and answered. *Take notes. Write down important information or ask the doctor to write it down. Ask for written instructions for any medication changes.*

Make sure that questions about preventive tests get asked. *The people you support have the same health problems, including diabetes, heart disease and cancer, as everyone else. However, they are less likely to get preventive tests for these health problems. You can help change this.*

After the Checkup

Share your notes from the checkup with the person you support. Go over the doctor's answers to the questions on the list. Make plans for follow-up. Make sure people get preventive tests as recommended.

Recommended Preventive Tests

All adults should be tested yearly for being overweight, obesity, and high blood pressure. The need for additional preventive tests for any of these health problems will be based upon the person's age, sex, health and family history:

High cholesterol	Men and Women
Type 2 diabetes	Men and Women
Colon cancer	Men and Women
Breast cancer	Women Only
Cervical cancer	Women Only
Osteoporosis	Men and Women
Prostate cancer	Men Only

Use the complete **Health Screenings Recommended by Age and Sex**

(<http://www.ddssafety.net/health/preventive-health/preventive-health-screenings-you-need>) chart when discussing preventive tests that may be needed with the person you support. Take it to the annual checkup and review it with the doctor.

What is a Mammogram?

A mammogram is a test that a doctor orders to screen for breast cancer. Go to <http://www.ddssafety.net/health/preventive-health/screening-breast-cancer-get-mammogram> for easy to understand information to share with the person you support.

Talk to the person about test results. You may need to get help, either from the doctor or a regional center nurse. Provide support with next steps when needed.

Remember to put the annual checkup on the calendar for next year!

Where Can I Go To Learn More?

Preventive Health Care:

http://www.dds.ca.gov/DSPT/Trainer/TrainerYear2_4.pdf

Get Screened:

<http://www.healthfinder.gov/HealthTopics/Category/doctor-visits/screening-tests/get-screened>

Get Important Shots:

<http://www.healthfinder.gov/HealthTopics/Category/doctor-visits/shotsvaccines/get-important-shots>