



Preventive Health Care

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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.

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 are well.

At the annual checkup the doctor will:

- ! **Review** the person's overall health,
- ! **Ask** what questions or concerns the person has,
- ! **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.



Before the Checkup

1. Develop a written list of questions and concerns for the doctor. Use this list for help:
<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.

Look for changes in a person's behavior. For example, when a person stays in their room most of the time, stops eating, or seems tired or irritable all the time. These changes may be a sign of a health problem.

The annual checkup is a chance to get everyone's questions asked and answered. Go over the list of questions and concerns with the person you support and their team to make sure you have ALL the questions. For example, if the person is worried about the possibility of skin cancer, ASK about it.

2. Develop a written list of medications for the person. Use this tool as a guide:
<http://www.ddssafety.net/health/preventive-health/my-medicine-list>

Include all medications the person takes, including vitamins and other supplements.

Provide information about when, how much and why the medication is taken. Make sure the doctor knows if the person:

- has any problems taking the medications;
- or, if the medication is not working for them.

3. 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.

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All adults should be tested for being overweight, for obesity, and for high blood pressure. The person’s need for additional preventive tests will be based upon their age, sex, health and family history. The doctor should be asked about preventive tests for:

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

4. 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/>.

5. Talk About What to Expect at the Annual Checkup.

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

Receptionist

First, a receptionist will greet the person. She or he may ask them to answer some health questions.

Nurse

Next, a nurse will:

- Take their blood pressure - to test for high blood pressure.
- Get their height and weight - to check for being overweight or for obesity.

The nurse will take the person to the doctor’s examining room.

Doctor

The doctor will review the information about the person and do a physical exam. The physical exam 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.

6. Ask the person what support they will need at the checkup.

Some individuals will want you to go with them. They may want help asking questions and taking notes. Others may want to go to the checkup on their own. In either situation, be sure the person is prepared.



At the Checkup

Give the doctor copies of the person's lists of:

- 1) questions and concerns, and
- 2) medications.

Make sure you do the following things:

- * Go over the list of questions and concerns.
Be sure all the questions are asked and answered in a way that you both understand.
- * Review any existing health problems. Make the doctor aware of any changes.
- * Go over the list of medications. Discuss any difficulty in taking medications. Tell the doctor if the medications aren't working. Share if you are having any side effects from the medicine.
- * Ask the doctor what preventive tests the person may need.
- * Ask the doctor if any vaccinations or booster shots are needed.
- * Ask the doctor what additional things the person can do to stay healthy. The doctor may ask questions about the person's exercise, eating and smoking habits.

Screening for Preventive Tests

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Make sure ALL these 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.

Asking About Preventive Tests

If the doctor recommends a preventive test, make sure the person gets answers to these questions:

- * What is the test for?
- * What can I do to prepare? When and where will I get the test? Do I need to have someone go with me?
- * What happens during the test? Will it be painful? Is there anything else I should know about the test?
- * Can I eat before the test? Should I take my medications?
- * When and from whom will I get my results?

Ask the doctor where to get more information. Again, take notes and get written instructions for scheduling the preventive test.



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 person's list.

If the doctor recommends a preventive test, help the person to schedule the test. Some people may be afraid to take a particular test. You can support the person by providing information to help the person:

- Understand more about why the test is important to them.
- Feel more comfortable.
- Know what to expect.

Talk about what assistance they will need or want during their appointment. A companion may provide needed support.

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

There are many on-line resources that provide helpful information about other preventive tests. Some are listed under *Additional Resources* at the end of this article, but there are many more.

Make sure test results are explained to the person in a way they understand. You may need help from a doctor or a nurse.

Make plans to follow-up on the doctor's recommendations. They may include getting more exercise, eating a healthier diet, and to stopping smoking. For more information on eating right, being active and how to stop smoking, go to www.ddssafety.net

Remember to put the annual checkup on the calendar for next year! Preventive health care is critical to helping people live longer, healthier lives.





Where To Go To Learn More

- **Preventive Health Care:** For more information on Preventive Health Care go to: 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>.
- **SPOT Skin Cancer quiz:** Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer...and one of the most preventable. Go to <https://www.aad.org/spot-skin-cancer/spot-skin-cancer-quiz> to learn more.
- **Tips for Mammography Staff:** How to Serve Women with Disabilities More Effectively: <http://www.aahd.us/2009/03/tips-for-mammography-staff-how-to-serve-women-with-disabilities-more-effectively/>.