

make it yours



What your doctor *hasn't* told you about preventive care.

The idea of preventive care—services that help you avoid illness and improve your health—may seem pretty simple. But your doctor is actually sorting through a steady stream of information to figure out what makes sense for *your* situation. Here's a peek at what's happening behind the scenes and some helpful things to think about.

The rules for preventive care are constantly changing, thanks to new medical research, medical advancements, new FDA approvals, and evolving health care laws. While you may hear about some things in the news, your doctor is often in the best position to balance reliable sources of information with your specific situation.

New information may have merit—or it may not.

A lot of organizations do medical research. It may be tempting to take the results as facts, but you should talk to your doctor about it first. He or she will know if enough evidence has been gathered to support the claims to justify a change in *your* care.

One of the primary sources that doctors use to understand the latest about preventive care is the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. That's a group of 16 doctors who are considered national experts in the fields of preventive medicine and primary care. The Task Force is recognized by Congress and the Department of Health and Human Services as *the* trusted, independent source for official U. S. guidelines for preventive care.

The guidelines are only guidelines.

While it's great to be aware of preventive care guidelines, you should talk with your doctor about which tests *you* actually need, and how often *you* should get them. For instance, studies* now show that annual exams and screenings aren't necessary for everyone—even the ones widely promoted for your age and gender. Why? Because they don't always improve early detection. "False positives" (when a test says you have an illness that you don't really have) may also lead to unnecessary (and costly) procedures, such as invasive biopsies, that could have serious side effects.

Don't believe everything you hear on TV.

Commercials for things like adult vaccinations for shingles or whooping cough can be informative, but they can also urge you to get things that might not be right for *you*. Think about it ... those ads are trying to *sell* you something. So before you jump to the conclusion that it's something you need, let your doctor help you make that decision.

*Sources:

- Prochazka, A., Caverly, T. General health checks in adults for reducing morbidity and mortality from disease. *JAMA Intern Med*/Vol 173 (NO. 5), Mar 11, 2013: 372.
- Mehrotra, A. MD., et al. Preventive Health Examinations and Preventive Gynecological Examinations in the United States. *Arch Intern Med*. 2007;167(17):1876-1883.

You have the final say, but ...

How you take care of yourself is ultimately up to you, but there's a lot that goes into your doctor's professional opinion. Plus, you're paying for his or her expertise. So when your doctor recommends a preventive screening, make sure to discuss these questions:

- Why do you recommend this test for me?
- Are there any risks from the screening itself?
- If the test finds something is wrong, what are my options?

It's OK to share what you know about preventive care with your doctor, but be open to what you don't know, too.

Benefits and services available may vary from plan to plan—please refer to your plan's Summary Plan Description for exact coverage details. This article is not intended to provide medical advice. Aon Hewitt does not recommend or endorse a particular course of medical treatment. If you have any questions concerning your medical condition or any drugs, treatment plans, or new symptoms, consult your health care provider.