



BEING WELL



IT'S NEVER TOO LATE  
TOO LATE TO START MAKING  
**HEALTHY CHOICES**

# BEING THE BEST YOU.

The choices you make every day about what you eat, how active you are and how often you see your doctor can have a big impact on your life. It's never too late to start making healthy choices and be the best you.

Inside this booklet you'll find ideas and resources to help you live well and take care of your health.

This information comes from experts and widely recognized guidelines about the best ways to be healthy. Keep this booklet handy and use it as a guide to being well. Remember, you and your doctor know best what your needs are. So don't worry if you have agreed on a different plan. Good communication between you and your doctor is one of the best ways to be as well as you can be.

# MAKING SMALL CHANGES CAN IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH.

A healthy lifestyle doesn't have to begin with big, dramatic changes. Choosing to make small changes and incorporating them into your life increases the likelihood that those changes will stick. You may find you want to do even more.

## GET MOVING

Move 30 minutes a day, five times a week. Your 30 minutes doesn't have to be done all at once — three 10-minute walks each day works, too.



### NEXT STEP

→ Write down three physical activities you can do for 10 minutes a day

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## EAT BETTER

Every healthy food choice you make counts. Eating healthy can help you avoid chronic conditions such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol, which are key factors in heart disease.

Try these easy tips:

- **Add more color.** Eating fruits and vegetables in a range of colors helps maximize your nutrient intake.
- **Mix it up.** Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables ensures you get more essential vitamins, so you can nourish all parts of your body.
- **Focus on fresh.** Enjoy the great taste and increased nutrients of fresh foods.



### NEXT STEP

- Write down one fruit or vegetable in each area you can add to your next grocery list

Color:

.....

Variety:

.....

Fresh:

.....



# DOCTORS AREN'T JUST FOR WHEN YOU'RE SICK.

Even if you feel fine or are very busy, it's important to see your doctor.

Preventive care includes things like yearly checkups, flu shots, and glucose and mammogram screenings.<sup>1</sup> Seeing your doctor even when you feel well can help you stay healthy and avoid serious health problems such as heart disease, diabetes or cancer.

An overview of preventive care services recommended by Blue Cross is available at [bluecrossmn.com](https://www.bluecrossmn.com). Enter "preventive care" in the search box.

Most preventive care is covered at 100 percent. What's covered at 100 percent for you depends on your health plan.<sup>2</sup>

## WHEN TO HAVE A CHECKUP

Adults of every age need to see their doctor often enough to get recommended screenings and shots, talk about risk factors (and how to reduce risk) and bring up other concerns. No one schedule fits everyone. The best plan is to follow your doctor's advice and the suggestions in this booklet.

## CHECKUP CHECKLIST

Your doctor will cover the basics:

- Measure your height, weight and body mass index (BMI)
- Take your blood pressure and order a blood test to check cholesterol
- Determine needed cancer screenings
- Talk about your health risks and how you can lower your risks

It is a good idea to bring a list of questions or concerns — as well as all of your medicine containers — to your checkup. This includes prescriptions, eye drops, vitamins, herbs, health supplements and any over-the-counter medicines you take on a regular basis.

## ADULTS NEED SHOTS, TOO

Talk with your doctor about the vaccines you may need to prevent disease.

- Tetanus/diphtheria booster, recommended every 10 years
- Flu shot, now recommended annually for everyone six months of age and older. This is especially important for anyone at high risk. High-risk groups include adults ages 50 and older; pregnant women; people with ongoing health problems such as heart disease, diabetes or asthma; and health care workers.
- Hepatitis A, hepatitis B, varicella (chickenpox), herpes zoster (shingles) and/or other vaccines, depending on age and health history

- Pneumococcal vaccine to help prevent pneumonia, usually a one-time vaccine at age 65 or older; also recommended for people under age 65 depending on health history
- Human papillomavirus (HPV) – series of three shots for women through age 26 who didn't receive the shots when they were younger

## CONTROL BLOOD PRESSURE

One out of every three people struggle with high blood pressure, and 50 percent of the population has prehypertension.<sup>3</sup>

### Blood pressure categories

RESULTS	CATEGORY	WHAT TO DO NEXT
<b>Lower than 120/80</b>	Healthy (OK)	Continue healthy choices. Get checked at least every two years.
<b>Between 120/80 and 139/89</b>	Prehypertension (warning)	Make new healthy choices and talk with your doctor. Get checked at least every year.
<b>140/90 or higher</b>	Hypertension (danger)	See your doctor soon.

High blood pressure, which often has no symptoms, can usually be treated and controlled. Some people need medicine. For others, lifestyle changes are enough. Losing weight, eating healthy, getting more exercise, limiting salt and alcohol, quitting smoking and controlling stress can help.





## ACTION

- Get your blood pressure checked
- If your results show prehypertension, talk to your doctor



## MANAGE CHOLESTEROL

Thirty percent of the population has been diagnosed with or has borderline high cholesterol.<sup>4</sup> The lower your total cholesterol (a fat-like substance in your blood), the better. That's because lowering your cholesterol can prevent a heart attack or stroke. Changes in diet, exercise and tobacco use can help. Medicine may also be needed.

Talk to your doctor about your cholesterol level. Here are general guidelines:

- Total cholesterol should be less than 200 mg/dL.
- LDL (low-density lipoprotein) or “bad” cholesterol should be less than 130 mg/dL. Too much LDL in your blood clogs your arteries. LDL should be less than 100 or possibly less than 70 for people who already have heart disease or diabetes.

- HDL (high-density lipoprotein) or “good” cholesterol helps keep arteries clean. HDL should be 40 mg/dL or higher.
- Triglycerides are another kind of fat in your blood. The goal is less than 150 mg/dL.

## WHEN TO HAVE A CHOLESTEROL TEST

Check your cholesterol at least every five years and know how your numbers compare to the general guidelines.



### ACTION

- Get your cholesterol checked
- Talk to your doctor about your numbers and any dietary changes or medicine that may be needed to help manage your cholesterol

## PREVENT DIABETES

You could be one of more than six million people in the United States living with type 2 diabetes and not know it, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Recognizing the disease early can help prevent even more damage to your body.

You may be eligible for diabetes screening covered at 100 percent by your health plan and at no cost to you.<sup>2</sup>

## QUIT SMOKING

The benefits of quitting smoking are enormous. Within 12 hours after your last cigarette, your body will begin to heal itself, and the benefits grow over time. One year after quitting, the excess risk of coronary heart disease is half that of a continuing smoker's.<sup>5</sup>

**Stop-Smoking Support** offers skilled Quit Coaching telephone-based support where you can develop a quit plan with your coach. You'll receive a quit guide to help you stick with your plan between calls.

## SUCCESSFUL QUITTERS





THE BENEFITS OF  
QUITTING SMOKING  
**ARE ENORMOUS**

# TAKE CARE OF ALL OF YOU.

Mental health problems change the way your brain works. They cause changes in how you feel, think and act and can affect you at home, work or school. Mental health problems can be caused by traits you are born with, as well as things going on in your life. Some are temporary; others may last a long time.

## MENTAL HEALTH

Feeling sad, depressed or anxious are normal emotions, but feeling those emotions most of the day for weeks and months may be a sign of illness. Depression is a common mental health concern. Other common concerns include eating disorders, attention deficit disorder, anxiety (worrying too much) and panic attacks.

Treatment often includes taking medicine and getting counseling to help change negative thoughts and behaviors.

## DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

Drug and alcohol abuse are also common problems. They disrupt people's lives. They can also lead to other illnesses and a greater risk of harm to you or others.

If you drink alcohol, know how much is too much. Experts suggest no more than two drinks a day for men and no more than one drink a day for women (a drink is the amount of alcohol in a 12-oz. can of beer or 6-oz. glass of wine). It is important to talk with your doctor about any drinking or drug use.

## SEEK HELP

Any of these problems can cause feelings of shame, but there is no need to feel that way. What's important is getting help. There are many ways to get help. Talk with your health care provider about steps you can take.

## TAKE A BREATH

Trouble sleeping? Eating too much? Not eating enough? These are normal reactions to stress, but changing the way you deal with life's ups and downs can make a difference in your mental and physical health. Tips for dealing with stress:

- **Get moving.** Try to get at least 30 minutes of exercise a day. Even if it's 10 minutes, three times a day, the benefits are the same.
- **Get sleeping.** Eight hours a night is important. If you need to, write down your "To Dos" and tackle them tomorrow, so you aren't counting them instead of sheep.
- **Get positive.** Did you know if you smile, even if you aren't happy, your brain will believe you are? Optimism can make a big difference.

# CANCER SCREENINGS CAN HELP FIND CANCER EARLY, WHEN TREATMENTS WORK BEST.

## BREAST CANCER

The good news about breast cancer is that now more people are surviving this disease. This is probably because more people find it early.

A mammogram with a breast exam — done by a health care provider — is the best way to find breast cancer early, according to the National Cancer Institute. A mammogram (a kind of low-dose X-ray) can show tumors that can't be felt with a breast exam.

### **When to have a breast exam (for women at normal risk):**

- Starting at age 20, have an exam by a health care provider every three years
- Starting at age 40, have an exam by a health care provider every year



### **When to have a mammogram:**

- For ages 40 through 49, you may need an annual mammogram if your risk of breast cancer is high
- For ages 50 through 75, schedule a mammogram every one to two years
- After age 75, talk with your doctor about what's best for you

## **CERVICAL CANCER**

Since Pap tests were introduced, the rate of cervical cancer has dropped by more than 70 percent. Pap tests can find precancerous (abnormal) cells that can be treated.

### **When to have a Pap test:**

- Start Pap tests at age 21 (or younger, if you are sexually active)
- Have a Pap test each year. After you have normal tests three times in a row, have the test at least every three years.
- After age 65, talk with your doctor about what's right for you

## **PROSTATE CANCER**

There are two common tests for prostate cancer. One is a digital rectal exam. The other is a "prostate-specific antigen" (PSA) blood test. Both tests can show changes in the prostate gland and are commonly used, but studies have not clearly shown that the tests lead to better health outcomes.

## WHAT TO DO ABOUT A PROSTATE CANCER TEST

Because the value of prostate cancer tests has not yet been proven, talk to your doctor about the potential risks and benefits. Decide together whether or not to get tested. You may be at higher risk of prostate cancer if you are African-American or have family members who have had the disease.

## COLON CANCER

Tests for colon cancer can be uncomfortable, but they could save your life. Colon cancer kills more Americans than any other cancer except lung cancer. Colon cancer can spread without early signs of problems. That's why it is so important to get tested.

Your doctor will most likely recommend one of the following tests:

NAME OF TEST	WHAT IT IS	HOW OFTEN
<b>Home fecal test for blood</b>	This at-home test shows if traces of blood are in your bowel movement. If blood is present, a colonoscopy will need to be done to find the cause.	Every year
<b>Flexible sigmoidoscopy</b>	The doctor uses a thin lighted tube to see inside the lower part of your colon. If a growth or polyp is found, a colonoscopy may need to be done.	Every five years
<b>Colonoscopy</b>	The doctor uses a thin lighted tube to see inside your whole colon. If a growth or polyp is found, the doctor can remove it and test it for cancer.	Every ten years

## WHEN TO GET A COLON CANCER TEST

The recommendations above are for most men and women between ages 50 and 75. African-Americans and American Indians are at higher risk and should begin screening at age 45. If you have risk factors such as chronic ulcerative colitis or family history of colon cancer, you will likely need more frequent screenings. In all cases, check with your doctor about the best choice for you.



# STAYING WELL WHEN YOU'RE EXPECTING.

Early and regular health care is an essential part of a healthy pregnancy.

Most American women see their health care provider more than 12 times when pregnant.<sup>6</sup> At each visit, your doctor will do tests to check your health and the health of your baby. The basics include checking your weight and blood pressure, listening for the baby's heartbeat and tracking the baby's growth.

Other tests will check certain health concerns. You'll also receive information and advice on topics such as preterm (early) labor, work hazards, breastfeeding, sex while pregnant, and labor and delivery.

Your doctor is there to help you. Ask any questions you have. It is a good idea to bring a written list of your questions. Also bring all your medication containers.



**YOUR DOCTOR IS THERE**  
**TO HELP YOU**

# CHECKUPS FOR CHILDREN.

Visits to the doctor when your child is well — at the recommended times — are important. They help your doctor review your child’s growth and development, and make sure that immunizations (shots) are up to date.

A “well-child visit” may include immunizations, a physical exam and measurements of height, weight, head size and body mass index (beginning at 2 years). It may also include vision and hearing tests, a health history update, assessment of development, and screenings (depending on age and risk factors).

Checkups are a chance for you to ask questions. Ask about breastfeeding, baby sleep position, healthy eating, sleep issues, exercise or other concerns. Your health care provider will ask you about your child’s growth and can give you tips that will help keep your child safer. Tips include baby-proofing your home, preventing injury in the home, not exposing children to secondhand smoke, protecting them from the sun, using car seats and using safety helmets.



## WHEN TO HAVE CHECKUPS<sup>7</sup>

### BABIES

3 – 5 days  
Before 1 month  
2 months  
3 months  
4 months

### TODDLERS AND PRESCHOOLERS

12 months  
15 months  
18 months  
24 months  
3 years  
4 years

### BIG KIDS AND YOUNG ADULTS

Ages 5  
through 21,  
every year





# IMMUNIZATIONS.

It's very important for children to get their checkups on time so that the doctor can provide immunizations on schedule.

Checkups are a good time to be sure they have had all the immunizations and make up any that were missed.

To see schedules for getting shots, visit [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov). Search for "immunization schedule."

## ASK ABOUT HPV VACCINE

Ask your daughter's doctor about the human papillomavirus (HPV) immunization. It protects women and girls from genital warts and the viruses that cause 70 percent of cervical cancers. The immunization, given in a series of three shots, is recommended for women and girls ages 9 through 26.<sup>8</sup>



# HELPING TEENS MAKE HEALTHY CHOICES.

Your teens are making choices that will affect them as adults. You still have a lot of power to affect your child's behavior.

Consider:

- Nearly all first-time use of tobacco happens before high school graduation.
- If parents, doctors or friends can help keep teens from using tobacco, most of them won't start later.
- Children as young as age 10 say they drink alcohol. While research shows that teen drinking is declining, even one binge can lead to big problems: overdose, a car crash or a pregnancy.
- The average age of girls starting menstrual periods (bleeding) is now 12 or 13 years old. Four out of five young people have sex as teens, which puts them at risk for pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).
- Nearly half of high school students in a national survey said they need basic information about HIV/AIDS, other STDs and birth control.

## GIVING TEENS WHAT THEY NEED TO KNOW

A health care provider can help teens make healthy choices. Ask your doctor to talk to your teen about tobacco use, sexual activity, alcohol use, physical activity, food and other health issues. Without judging, a doctor can offer information and answer questions teens may have about their changing bodies.

# LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX.

## SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES (STD)

It can be hard to talk about STDs no matter who you are talking with. But there's much to learn and talk about. Not knowing can affect your long-term health.

Consider:

- 25 diseases are spread through sexual contact
- One in three young people will catch at least one STD by age 24
- Many STDs have no symptoms. You don't know unless you are tested.

Without treatment, STDs can cause many health problems later in life, especially for women. Both chlamydia and gonorrhea — the most common STDs among teens — cause pelvic inflammatory disease, a serious medical problem that can reduce the chance of pregnancy later in life. Both can be successfully treated when found early.

## **STD SCREENING RECOMMENDATION**

If you are sexually active, talk with your doctor about STD testing. Men often show more symptoms than women, so they tend to get testing or treatment. Because they may not have symptoms, sexually active teens and adult women should be tested each year for chlamydia until age 25. After age 25, get tested often if you are at risk. Your doctor can also talk with you about tests for other STDs, including gonorrhea and syphilis. People at high risk for HIV should be tested often. Risk factors include history of other STDs, drug use involving needles, a past or present partner with HIV, men who have had sex with men, and if you had a blood transfusion between 1978 and 1985.

# MAKING HEALTHY CHOICES AS YOU AGE.

Common sense choices for good health don't change as you get older.



It's still important to eat right, avoid tobacco, drink only in moderation, be physically active and stay at a healthy weight. Adult women of all ages need to have an adequate intake of calcium and vitamin D in their diet. Supplements may be helpful and are often recommended for women after menopause.

Chances are, these choices will help you stay active and feel better longer. But after age 65, you may need to see your doctor more often and about other health issues.

## SCREENING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OLDER ADULTS

- **Vision and hearing check** — Routine screening is recommended after age 65. Talk with your doctor about what's best for you.
- **Medicine review** — Review all of your drugs with a doctor or pharmacist at least annually and every time you change or add a new medicine.
- **Osteoporosis (soft or brittle bones) screening** — Ask your doctor if you should be screened. While more common in women, men can also have this problem.
- **Abdominal aortic aneurysm (a major blood vessel) screening** — An ultrasound exam of this major artery is recommended one time for men age 65 through 74 who have ever smoked.

# A HEALTHIER TOMORROW STARTS TODAY.

- Pick one area and start to implement small changes
- Be patient and feel good about your decision to improve your health. It's never too late.
- As your new healthy choices become part of your lifestyle, pick another area to work on. Before you know it, you'll be living a healthier life.



## NOTATIONS

1. Your provider determines whether services delivered are preventive.
2. How often and what kind of preventive care services you need depends on your age, gender, health and family history. Check your health plan benefits for details.
3. U.S. Surgeon General's Report, 1988, p. 202.
4. U.S. Surgeon General's Report, 2010, p. 359.
5. Stop-Smoking Support Enrollment Reports, Behavioral Solutions, LLC, 2000-2004 and Stop-Smoking Support Participation Reports, Alere Wellbeing, Inc. 2005-2012.
6. March of Dimes, "Prenatal Care."
7. American Academy of Pediatrics and Bright Futures.
8. Minnesota Department of Health.

**LIVE  
FEARLESS™**



As Minnesota's health care leader, we live fearless. We believe good health is for everyone — not just our members. It's a big vision. And that's why we're investing in the communities we serve and empowering individuals to make smart choices about their health. Live fearless with the peace of mind that comes from knowing you're protected by the strength and stability of Blue Cross. We invite you to join us.



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