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*By Carrie Kingsley, ARNP
Family Practice Clinic*

What should I expect at preventative care visits

As health care becomes more complicated, a common question is what you should expect from visits focused on preventive care. These visits are often generically called “a physical.” This is a challenging question for providers too, as patients come to us with numerous questions and limited time in the exam room. To help make your visit as productive as possible, consider the following tips prior to your visit:

1. **Come with questions.** We want to know what is important to you. We want to know how your life has been since we last saw you. We want to know how YOU are feeling about your health and how we can help make your days better. It is helpful if you write questions down before the visit so we can address them in an organized manner. If it works for you, it is also helpful if you bring a family member or friend who can contribute to the conversation and help you remember what we talked about after the visit.
2. **Bring a list of your medications OR bring all of your medications to the visit.** An annual medication review is a vital part of your health. As a person ages, the medications that were important in the past may no longer be useful. They may also be causing harmful side effects such as dizziness. Make sure we know what you are taking so we can help you maximize your health. This includes any herbal or over the counter supplements.
3. **Be prepared to discuss preventive services.** Although we do want to know about that rash you had last week, or the congestion you are currently experiencing, we also want to focus on preventive health issues. Rather than solely focusing on acute issues, it is our time to focus on looking toward the future and improving your overall health. Be prepared to discuss screening for cervical cancer screening (pap testing), breast cancer (mammograms), colon cancer (colonoscopies), and prostate cancer. Healthcare is changing rapidly. As we learn more and more about different types of cancer, decisions about whether and how to screen are more complicated. Preventive visits are our time to go over screening exams with you and together decide which tests would be beneficial.
4. **Ask for a summary of the visit.** We don’t expect you to remember everything we talked about. It is important that you leave with a summary of the visit that outlines the discussion and the plan. The visit is not useful if you leave without the information you need or a plan to improve your health.

Preventive care visits are an important part of your health. It is our chance to work together with you to make your life as healthy as possible. Use the above tips above to make your visits productive. We look forward to seeing you & working together to maximize your health.

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Carrie Kingsley is a board certified family nurse practitioner serving the health needs of our community. Bilingual in English and Spanish, she is experienced in Primary Care and Emergency Medicine; she has a special interest in pediatrics, women's health and geriatric medicine. Questions or comments? Please call 548-3420 or visit www.cascademedical.org