

IN CONJUNCTION WITH

Tom Joyner's "Take A Loved One to the Doctor Day"

create the
good
AARP



Tips,
Tools and
Resources for
Individuals

Take a Loved One to the Doctor

Taking your loved one to the doctor can help prevent health problems before they arise. Encouraging friends and family to make an appointment for a checkup or screening is a great way to help someone you care about.

INCLUDED IN THIS KIT:

- 1** Overview
- 2** The Basic Steps
- 5** Questions to Ask Your Doctor
- 6** Health History Tips
- 7 & 8** Medical History and Medication Forms
- 9 & 10** Tips For Uninsured
- 11** Additional Resources



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OVERVIEW

The problem

Many of us disregard the importance of regular checkups. Some of us avoid doctor visits out of fear and others simply because it's not part of our routine. When your loved one puts off seeing the doctor, a small health problem can become a more serious one. And some of the most serious health issues don't always have obvious symptoms.

The solution

You may be the one person who can convince your loved one to go to the doctor. Give it a try.

Often just by asking some basic questions about diet and lifestyle and running some quick tests, a doctor can assess someone's health and well-being. The doctor may be able to suggest behaviors or treatments to dramatically lower the risk of serious health problems.

Time commitment

The wait times at the doctor's office can vary greatly depending on the doctor and the day. But isn't the health of your loved ones and friends worth one to three hours of your time? Besides, that's what the magazines in the waiting room are for. And good health is always worth the investment.

Special considerations

It's important for people of all ages to see a doctor regularly. People age 50 and over should see a doctor at least once a year.

Who can do this?

Anyone who has a big heart! And of course, everyone who has a loved one who might benefit from a doctor visit.

Great reasons to do this project

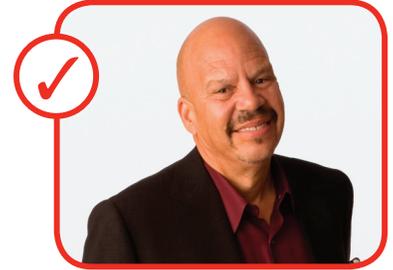
- Help your loved one learn what he or she needs to do to get and stay healthy.
- Reassure the whole family about your loved one's health.
- Use this as a reminder to see the doctor yourself.
- You might save a loved one's life!

 African-Americans face a higher risk of some serious health conditions, including diabetes, stroke, high blood pressure, cancer, asthma and obesity.



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The Basic Steps

STEP 1: TALK TO YOUR LOVED ONE, THEN MAKE THE APPOINTMENT

You might need to turn on your powers of persuasion to get your loved one to agree to see a doctor. Many people have a long list of reasons for avoiding doctors' visits. Don't fight them on every point. Just ask them to do it for you and the rest of the family. Tell them you want to enjoy their company for many more years to come, and this is one quick, easy step in helping to make that happen.

Take the Tom Joyner "Take Your Loved One to the Doctor" pledge at www.BlackAmericaweb.com/drday. Your participation proves that it is important to not only take care of ourselves, but also those who we love and care about.

If your loved one is uninsured, check out the tip sheet in this kit for finding affordable care in your community.

STEP 2: GATHER INFORMATION BEFORE THE APPOINTMENT

Preparing a little in advance will help your loved one get a lot more out of the doctor visit. Here are some suggestions of information to gather before you go see the doctor. Remember: The most important thing is going to the doctor, so don't worry if you cannot get all of this information together before the visit.

- Questions for the doctor: Help your loved one take control of his or her health by making sure the doctor addresses all of your questions thoroughly. The best way to do this? Write the questions down in advance. See our sample list of questions below.
- Bring all medications your loved one is taking to the doctor during the visit. Doctors typically ask what medication the patient is taking. By bringing in the bottles, you won't have to wonder if you remembered everything, and the doctor can see the dose and frequency of each drug.
- Bring some health history information. Write down diseases, surgeries, family history of cancer, diabetes, heart disease, etc. See the sample tips.



STEP 3: REVIEW A STAYING HEALTHY CHECKLIST

You may want to review a list of tests and immunizations suggested for the age of your loved one. The Additional Resources section includes links where you can find health tips and suggested health screenings for all ages. Review the age-appropriate list for your loved one and take it along with you on your visit.

STEP 4: HEAD FOR THE DOCTOR

Your loved one may not want you to join him or her in the examination room. Do not insist on doing so, but do try to ensure that you and your loved one get all of your questions answered before the appointment ends. If the doctor seems to be rushing through the appointment, be polite but firm in asking for more time for your loved one. Remember: Your loved one is the paying customer here. Do not leave the doctor's office until ALL of your questions are answered! A staff nurse or physician assistant may also be helpful in answering questions. If you are in the appointment, take notes for your loved one. If not, urge him or her to write down the doctor's answers to your questions and any special instructions on lifestyle and diet changes.

If the doctor orders follow-up tests – for example, blood tests for cholesterol, diabetes or other conditions – make sure you get clear instructions on how and where to do the tests and whether there is any out-of-pocket expense. This will help make those tests go more smoothly for your loved one.

If the doctor conveys concern about a potential serious health condition, remain calm. Gather as much information as you can from the doctor, and never agree to any drastic actions – such as scheduling a surgery – without seeking a second opinion from another doctor.

STEP 5: TALK IT OVER AND PLAN HOW TO FOLLOW UP

Based on the doctor visit, your loved one may need to start new medications, begin a daily exercise routine or change his or her diet. Such changes may seem small, but they can feel burdensome to some people, for example, by implying that the patient has been misbehaving for years! Be sensitive to your loved one and commit as much time as you can to helping them make any transitions that will improve their health.

Let's be real: Lifestyle changes can be hard. For example, it's not often easy for some people to start exercising.



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But most people can start walking more. Walking is easy, convenient and inexpensive. Nearly everyone can do it at any skill, level from grandparents to children. Plus it has the lowest dropout rate and injury rate of all exercise programs. Studies show that people who have exercise partners – even if for a simple 10-minute walk a few days a week – stick with their exercise plans better than people who try to go it alone. So help your loved one find a neighbor or friend to walk with.

Also, almost everyone who commits to lifestyle changes will occasionally slip up by overeating, sneaking a cigarette or skipping a day or two of exercise. That's okay! We're all human. The key is to get your loved one to view those events as minor interruptions, not an end to their health effort.

Keeping a list of medications can help you and your loved one keep track of what they are taking, including prescriptions and over-the-counter medicines and supplements. Check out the handy medication record.

One easy way you can continue to help is by having a daily phone call with your loved one – just a few minutes – to check in and ask how everything's going.

STEP 6: INSPIRE OTHERS ON CREATETHEGOOD.ORG!

TELL US WHAT YOU DID!

We want to hear stories about how you helped give back to your community.

<http://createthegood.org/gogreen?shareyourstory>

You just might inspire others to do the same.

SHARE FEEDBACK

We are always looking for feedback on our materials, so please let us know how this guide was helpful or additional information you wish we could have included. Share lessons learned and other tips for others who are taking their loved one to the doctor: <http://www.aarp.org/community/groups/CreateTheGood>

Or join the conversation at the Black Community page at AARP: http://www.aarp.org/aarp/black_community/

KEEP UP THE GOOD!

Remember: Whether you've got five minutes, five hours or five days, you can make a positive impact in your community. And if you have more time, consider organizing another service activity, finding local opportunities and posting your events at CreateTheGood.org/how-to.

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Visit **CreateTheGood.org** for more opportunities, tools and ideas to help improve your community.



Questions To Ask Your Doctor

Your relationship with your doctor, including how well you talk with each other, affects your care. A good relationship – where you and your doctor share information and work together to make the best decisions about your health – will result in the best care. In addition to bringing your medications (or a list of them) and a list of any symptoms you may have, here are some questions to make talking to your doctor more effective:

Problem

- What is wrong? How do you know? What caused this problem?

Tests

- What tests do I need and why?
- What do the tests involve?
- How do I prepare for the tests?
- When will I know the test results?
- Will my insurance cover the cost of the tests?

Treatment

- What are my treatment choices?
- What are the benefits and risks of each treatment?
- What are the side effects?
- Which treatment is most common for my condition?
- What do I do if treatment fails?

Medication

- What kind of medication(s) must I take? For how long?
- What does the drug do? Will there be any side effects?
- What should I do if I have side effects?
- Can I take a generic version of the drug?
- Will the medicine interact with any I am already taking?
- Should I avoid any kind of food or activity while taking this medicine?

Follow-Up

- Do I need to see a specialist? Should I get a second opinion?
- Do I need a follow-up visit?



Health History Tips

Keeping a written health history can improve the health care you get and help you stay well. It serves as a memory device and a communication tool. Having a record of your health is especially handy when you have limited time during a doctor visit. Information your doctor might need to diagnose and treat you will be at your fingertips.

What to Include

You don't have to be an organization freak to keep health records. Nor do you need to spend countless hours of your time. At a minimum, you can use charts or blank pages in a journal or notebook to record:

- personal identification, including name, birth date and blood type
- doctor visits and date of last physical
- dates and results of tests, shots, procedures or health screenings
- any major illnesses or surgeries you've had and when
- a list of all the medications you take, the dosages and how long you've been taking them

Other Information to Write Down

- any chronic conditions you have
- all allergies, including drug and food allergies
- the names of your pharmacist and all your doctors, with their addresses and telephone numbers
- birth date and blood type
- family history of illnesses, such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes and mental illness
- the name and phone number of an emergency contact and/or caregiver
- the name, policy number, address and telephone number of your health insurance company
- whether you have an advance directive or living will
- organ donor authorization
- opinions and correspondence from specialists and providers
- eye and dental records
- permission forms for release of information, operations and other medical procedures
- history of any counseling received
- lifestyle habits: smoking, drinking, sleep, exercise, eating (how much, how often)

And for a great online tool for writing your health history, check out

<https://familyhistory.hhs.gov/fhh-web/home.action>



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What I'm Taking	Reason for Use	Form <i>(pill, patch, liquid, injection, etc.)</i>	Dosage	How Much & When	Use <i>(regularly or occasionally)</i>	Start/Stop Dates <i>(1/5/05 - 3/5/05) (1/1/94 - ongoing)</i>	Notes or Special Directions
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Be sure to include ALL prescription drugs, over-the-counter drugs, vitamins and herbal supplements.

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Tips for Finding Health Centers for the Services You Need When Uninsured

You want to take good care of yourself and your family, but have lost the health insurance you had or do not have the coverage you need for all your health care concerns. Finding a clinic and navigating program benefits may be confusing at best. The good news is that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) has identified helpful web-based tools to assist you.

Search Affordable Clinics: HRSA's Online Find a Health Center Search Tool

www.findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov

- Find a federally funded health center located near you.
- Search for health facilities by address, state, or county.
- If you need help with your search, contact the HRSA Information Center at the toll-free number, 1-888-275-4772, to speak with an Information Specialist who will assist you.
- Information Specialists are available 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. EST, Monday–Friday.

Obtain Free or Reduced-Cost Health Care www.hrsa.gov/hillburton

- According to the Hill-Burton Act, all health care facilities receiving government funds under Title XVI are required to provide free or reduced-cost health and clinical services to eligible individuals.
- Information packets are available by calling the Hill Burton Hotline 1-800-638-0742 (1-800-492-0359 in Maryland).

Discover Federal and State Assistance Programs for Older Americans:

AARP Benefits QuickLINK www.aarp.org/quicklink

- The AARP Foundation has a benefits finder tool that allows you to search for a wide variety of federal and state level benefits programs.
- AARP Benefits QuickLINK focuses on benefits programs for older Americans.
- Benefits programs include food and prescription assistance.



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Get Help Obtaining Prescription Drugs: www.NeedyMeds.com

- NeedyMeds is a nonprofit database that helps patients locate low-cost prescription drug programs.
- Search by specific drug name to find what specific assistance programs are available for your prescription.
- Information is available for generic and brand name drugs.

Learn About Federal Government Benefits: www.GovBenefits.gov

- GovBenefits.gov is the official benefits website of the U.S. government with information on over 1,000 benefit and assistance programs.
- Benefits areas of focus include health care, Medicare and Medicaid and disability assistance.

Got questions about the new Health Care Law?
www.aarp.org/getthefacts

AARP has the facts and answers to commonly asked questions.





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Additional Resources

Tools

Medical history: <https://familyhistory.hhs.gov/fhh-web/home.action>

Checklists for screening and health at any age: <http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/ppipix.htm#tools>

Women: Stay Healthy at 50+ Checklists for your health: www.aarp.org/womenchecklist

Men: Stay Healthy at 50+ Checklists for your health: www.aarp.org/menchecklist

Easy form for listing all the medications you take: www.aarp.org/medicationrecord

More information

How to choose good medical care (from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality):

<http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/qualcare.html>

Preparing for a doctor visit – video:

http://assets.aarp.org/external_sites/caregiving/multimedia/BT_DoctorsVisits.html

Talking with your doctor – why it’s important:

<http://www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/TalkingWithYourDoctor/>

Ask the right questions about your prescriptions – video:

http://assets.aarp.org/external_sites/caregiving/multimedia/BT_TalkingtoYourDoc.html

Becoming a partner in your health care:

http://www.aarp.org/health/staying_healthy/prevention/becoming_a_partner_in_your_healthcare.html

Top health problems for African-Americans:

<http://www.cdc.gov/omhd/Populations/BAA/BAA.html>