



Tips,  
Tools and  
Resources for  
Individuals

# Mind Your Screens and Cues: Help Others Prevent Health Problems

Making sure someone gets recommended screenings and vaccines is one of the best and easiest ways to help others keep themselves healthy. For many screens and vaccines, a doctor visit isn't required. Educating friends and family about the importance of preventive health care – and helping them get that care – is a great way to help someone you care about.

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## OVERVIEW

### The problem

Because recommended vaccines are required for kids to enter school, parents do an excellent job of getting their children the required vaccines. The same cannot be said for adults, largely due to a lack of awareness of the benefits of preventive care. Many American adults fail to get the basic health screenings and vaccines recommended by doctors.

### The solution

You can be a champion for the health of others by motivating them to get recommended screenings and vaccines. Screenings like mammograms and cholesterol checks often detect chronic diseases in their early, most treatable stages. Vaccines can help stave off illnesses, like influenza and pneumonia, which kill tens of thousands of Americans every year. You can also educate others on the benefits of preventive care and help them to find convenient, affordable locations to get that preventive care. Many screenings and vaccines are available in walk-in clinics, community centers and even retail stores.



Often adults don't know which recommended screenings and vaccines they need, never think about getting screens or vaccines and have an unfavorable attitude toward particular screens or vaccines.

### Time commitment

Most screenings and vaccines take only a few minutes, although some, like a colonoscopy, can take a few hours.

### Special considerations

None.

### Who can do this?

Everyone.

### Great reasons to do this project

- Help people in your community learn the value of screenings and vaccines.
- Help people understand the screens they need and when they need them.
- Help people avoid and/or manage some health conditions by getting them to see their health care providers.
- A good relationship with a provider can lead people to adopt healthier lifestyles.

Only 25% of the nearly 55 million Americans between the ages of 50 and 64 receive a recommended set of preventive services, and the percentage is even lower among African-Americans and Hispanics/Latinos.





## The Basic Steps

### STEP 1: REVIEW THE STAYING HEALTHY CHECKLIST

Review the staying healthy checklists (one each for [women](#) and [men](#), listed in the Additional Resources section) to see which screenings and vaccines your friends, family or people in your community should be getting.

### STEP 2: PERSUADE SOMEONE TO GET NEEDED SCREENS AND VACCINES

Healthy working adults who receive flu shots report fewer respiratory illnesses, fewer days of sick leave and fewer visits to a doctor.



You might need to turn on your powers of persuasion to get people to agree to tests and shots. Show them the “Staying Healthy” checklist for their age and sex (in the Additional Resources section). Share some statistics from the Tip Sheet in this guide on how preventive care really helps people stay healthier later in life.

Many people have a long list of reasons for avoiding medical visits. Don’t fight them on every point. Just ask them to do it for you and for their family. Tell them that the people who love them want to enjoy their company for many more years to come, and this is one quick, easy step in helping to make that happen. See the Tip Sheet in this guide for more suggestions.

Make note of all the medications the person is taking so they can share that information with the health care provider, if asked. This is more important with vaccines than with screenings but could be useful information in either case.

For additional tips on helping someone prepare for a checkup, see Create The Good’s [Take a Loved One to the Doctor](#) how-to guide.



### STEP 3: IDENTIFY LOCATIONS FOR SERVICES AND HELP SOMEONE GET THERE

Doctors' offices, hospitals and health clinics offer screenings and vaccines, but they're not your only options. Your local pharmacy, community center and other gathering places often will offer flu shots, cholesterol screenings and other simple preventive services. Many employers offer such services as well. Check with your human resources department to see if they have anything planned for the year. Even if they don't, they may have suggestions for efficient, reliable and affordable screens and vaccines.

Also check with your local health department and read the local newspaper; both should have information on screenings and vaccines in your community. Another option is [The AARP/Walgreens Wellness Tour](#). The Wellness Tour buses are driving across America offering free screenings in many communities. Some sites may require an appointment, so call before bringing or sending the person there.

Find out from a web search or a quick call to the provider what to expect at the visit. Quick, noninvasive screening? Taking a drop of blood? A mildly painful shot? A few minutes on a treadmill? Then share this information with the person who will get the care. If people know what to expect at the visit and don't encounter any unwanted surprises, they are more likely to appreciate the value of the care – and that means they'll be more willing to return for screens and vaccines in the future.

Make sure the person knows the appointment dates and times, and remind them a day or two in advance. If they do not have their own transportation, help ensure that they have reliable transport to and from the visits – from you, one of their family members or public transportation.

“Here I am, the health and fitness ambassador for AARP, speaking to millions each month about staying healthy, and I let my annual checkups fall to the bottom of my to-do list. It's not all about eating right and exercising; preventive steps can make just as much – or in some cases more – of a difference. Getting my mammogram literally saved my life.”

–Martina Navratilova  
AARP Health and Fitness Ambassador





### STEP 4: ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO GET SERVICES

Screenings can help doctors detect and treat breast cancer and colorectal cancer. Hispanic/Latina women are more likely to die from breast cancer than from any other cancer. Breast cancer is also the second leading cancer death among black women. African-Americans and Hispanics are more likely than people in other racial groups to die from colorectal cancer.



Share your enthusiasm for screenings and vaccines with your community! Use email lists, electronic newsletters, social networking websites and other online communications to reach a lot of people quickly and easily.

Encourage people to become familiar with the screenings and vaccines checklists, and let them know how you found places to get services.

Think of places you gather with friends and family and how you might help others in your group make themselves a priority. Take the checklist to family gatherings, church groups, neighborhood card games or garden clubs and talk to your friends about why it's important to get immunized and screened. Include a reference in your annual holiday letter or add a tag line in your email signature (like "Get routine vaccines and screenings: Preventive care now saves lives later.").

### STEP 5: FOLLOW UP

Many screenings and shots need to be done annually. Here are some tips to continue with your screening and shot routines:

- Schedule the next appointment at the end of their visit.
- Have the doctor, clinic or health provider send them a reminder in the mail or give them a call when the time for their next screening or immunization nears.
- Keep in touch with family and friends and remind each other of the next service.
- If eligible, have them enroll in Medicare to have a free annual well-visit to a doctor and receive a personalized disease prevention plan.
- Mark their calendar.



# 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.

[www.CreateTheGood.org/stories](http://www.CreateTheGood.org/stories)

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 people interested in motivating people to get screenings and vaccines at [www.aarp.org/CreateTheGoodgroup](http://www.aarp.org/CreateTheGoodgroup).

### 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 [www.CreateTheGood.org](http://www.CreateTheGood.org).



## Why Get Preventive Services?

Many people don't think they need screenings and vaccines. That's understandable: It's hard to take time out of your day to go get a shot when you feel fine. The table below can help you convince friends, family and members of your community that preventive medicine makes sense.

Rationale for avoiding services	Answer	Benefit
<i>I don't know what shots and screenings I need.</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review the Staying Healthy checklist listed in the Resources section.</li> <li>2. Talk to your doctor.</li> </ol>	You'll know what services you need and how often.
<i>I feel fine, and I don't get sick.</i>	You don't know what's happening on the inside – often the early stages of health problems don't have symptoms. For example, you can't know you have high cholesterol without a blood test.	Screenings can help identify health problems in their early stages, when treatment or behavior change can be most effective. Vaccines can prevent diseases.
<i>I heard the flu shot makes you sick.</i>	The flu vaccine is made from inactivated, or dead, flu virus. It cannot cause you to get sick with the flu.	No flu! You won't have to miss work or fun events. Plus you won't infect your loved ones.
<i>I can't get to the doctor's office by myself.</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Carpool with a friend or family member.</li> <li>2. Check into community transit services.</li> </ol>	Enjoying someone's company before and after the screening/shot
<i>I don't like needles or doctor appointments.</i>	See the Additional Resources section for advice from people who already had the procedure; talk with your health care provider about your concerns.	Learn from others who have similar fears.
<i>The screenings and vaccines are too expensive; I can't pay for them.</i>	Medicaid, Medicare and private insurances cover many screenings and vaccines. To locate free or reduced-cost health care services, see the Tools section.	Getting recommended screenings and vaccines for free or at reduced cost



# Quick facts about a few common shots and screenings

## Vaccines

### Flu Vaccine:

- The seasonal flu is a highly contagious disease caused by the influenza virus.
- 5%–20% of the U.S. population is affected each year.
- Flu shots help reduce the risk of being infected with the seasonal flu.
- The seasonal flu shot is recommended annually for individuals aged 50 and over.
- The medicine in the shot is made up of dead influenza virus, and the shot is given in the upper arm.
- Minor side effects can occur from the flu shot: aches, pain, swelling or bruising at the injection site and fever.

### Pneumococcal Vaccine:

- Pneumonia is a serious lung infection that causes coughing, chest pain, shortness of breath, fatigue, nausea.
- To reduce the likelihood of getting pneumonia, the pneumococcal vaccine is available.
- All adults aged 65 and older, adults 19 through 64 who smoke or have asthma and nursing or long-term care residents should get the vaccine once if unvaccinated or if you are not sure if you've been vaccinated.

## Screenings

### Breast Cancer:

- Breast cancer is the most common cancer affecting women, regardless of race and ethnicity.
- Hispanic women are more likely to die from breast cancer than from any other cancer.
- Breast cancer is the second leading cancer death among African-American women.
- A mammogram can be used to detect breast cancer in its early, most treatable stages.
- Women should start breast cancer screening around age 50 (talk with a medical professional to determine your best starting point).
- Women aged 50–74 should have a mammogram every two years or according to a doctor's order.



### Colorectal Cancer:

- Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in men and women.
- African-American men and women are more likely to develop colorectal cancer; they are also more likely to die from the disease compared to other races and ethnicities.
- Hispanic/Latino populations also have a high risk for developing and dying from the disease, compared to other races and ethnicities.
- Colorectal cancer is most common in people over age 50.
- Screening is recommended for men and women aged 50–75.
- Up to 60% of colorectal cancer deaths could be prevented if all men and women 50 and older were screened.
- Types of screening: high-sensitivity fecal occult blood testing (FOBT), sigmoidoscopy and colonoscopy

### Cholesterol:

- Cholesterol is a natural substance needed by the body, but having too much can lead to stroke and heart disease, the number-one cause of death among adults in the U.S.
- “High cholesterol” is defined as 240 mg/dL and above; the desirable level for adults is less than 200 mg/dL.
- Nearly one in six adults has high cholesterol.
- Caucasians have the highest percentage of high cholesterol, followed by Mexican-Americans and then African-Americans.
- More women have high cholesterol than men.
- To test cholesterol, a health care provider performs a blood test that detects the good and bad cholesterol levels present in the blood.
- Screening can be done at any age – talking with a health care provider can help determine the best start point.
- Healthy adults should have their cholesterol levels tested every five years.



### **Blood Pressure:**

- High blood pressure can cause heart disease, kidney disease, stroke and congestive heart failure.
- One in three adults has high blood pressure.
- African-American men and women develop high blood pressure more often than other races.
- High blood pressure levels increase with age.
- You can get your blood pressure tested anywhere – by a doctor, using a machine at a drugstore or by a home monitoring kit.

### **Prostate Cancer:**

A common health concern for many older men is prostate cancer. You may know someone who has been diagnosed with prostate cancer or have seen the television commercials talking about screening. However, there is no prostate cancer screening recommendation that applies to all men. Instead, health care experts suggest men talk with a health care provider about prostate health.

Suggest to others that they talk to a health care provider about:

- Prostate Cancer
- Tobacco Counseling
- Vision Tests
- Hearing Tests
- Physical Activity/Obesity
- Alcohol Counseling
- Glaucoma
- Depression Counseling
- Osteoporosis
- Skin Cancer



## Where to Get Services

The table below suggests places where screenings and vaccines are typically offered.

PREVENTIVE SERVICE	PLACES TO GO
Flu Shot	Doctor’s office/clinic Grocery pharmacies Drugstores Health department Community health fair
Pneumococcal Vaccine	Doctor’s office/clinic Health department Community health fair Hospital
Cholesterol Test	Doctor’s office/clinic Health department Community health fair Hospital
Blood Pressure	Doctor’s office/clinic Grocery pharmacies Drugstores Health department Community health fair Hospital
Colonoscopy	Doctor’s office/clinic Hospital
Mammogram	Doctor’s office/clinic Hospital Mammogram center

### No health insurance?

Screenings and vaccinations can be a financial burden on people who are without health insurance. Here are some tips for finding health centers when uninsured:



### Where to find low cost or free health care clinics:

[findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov](https://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov)

- Search for health centers near you or your loved ones that provide care regardless of ability to pay or insurance status.
- These clinics offer recommended vaccinations and screenings tests, along with many other important health services (such as dental care, mental health care and well-visit checkups).

### Discover Federal and State Assistance Programs for Older Americans – AARP Benefits QuickLINK: [www.aarp.org/quicklink](https://www.aarp.org/quicklink)

- 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, such as prescription and food assistance.



# How the New Health Care Law Impacts Preventive Benefits

The new health care law includes new prevention and wellness benefits that could help keep you healthy and catch health problems early. Under the new law, insurers must offer proven preventive services – like screenings, vaccines and checkups – to you at no additional out-of-pocket charge.

### For People with Insurance:

The health care law requires some new health plans to cover important preventive and wellness benefits with no deductibles and copayments. Examples include services such as screenings and vaccines for cancer or influenza. This requirement applies to new individual and group insurance plans and is effective this year.

### For People with Medicare:

Starting in 2011, Medicare will pay for an annual wellness visit and a personalized prevention plan.

The personalized prevention plan may include the following:

- An assessment of your health risks
- Your updated medical history
- A list of your current health care providers
- A list of your current prescription medications
- Your height, weight and blood pressure measurements
- A screening schedule for appropriate preventive services for you to follow over the next five to 10 years
- A list of your health risk factors along with treatment options

Medicare will also continue to cover a Welcome to Medicare physical exam for people who are new to the Medicare program. The Welcome to Medicare exam is free, with no deductibles and copayments. Those who are new to Medicare cannot get both the Welcome to Medicare exam and the annual wellness visit during their first 12 months of enrollment. The Welcome to Medicare exam is available during the first 12 months of enrollment into the Medicare program. The annual wellness visit takes place each year after that.

For those with a Medicare Advantage plan, most of these plans offer Medicare-covered preventive services with no deductibles and copayments. The new health care law does not require Medicare Advantage plans to offer preventive services free of charge. If you have a Medicare Advantage plan, you should check with your plan to confirm what the deductibles and copayments are for preventive services, if any.



### Additional Resources

Create The Good's Take a Loved One to the Doctor Toolkit: [www.CreateTheGood.org/toolkit/take-loved-one-doctor](http://www.CreateTheGood.org/toolkit/take-loved-one-doctor)

Women: Stay Healthy at 50+ Checklists for your health: [www.ahrq.gov/ppip/women50.htm](http://www.ahrq.gov/ppip/women50.htm)

Men: Stay Healthy at 50+ Checklists for your health: [www.ahrq.gov/ppip/men50.htm](http://www.ahrq.gov/ppip/men50.htm)

Checklists for screening and health at any age: [www.ahrq.gov/clinic/ppipix.htm#tools](http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/ppipix.htm#tools)

Medicare Coverage of Preventive Health Services: [www.medicare.gov/navigation/manage-your-health/preventive-services/preventive-service-overview.aspx](http://www.medicare.gov/navigation/manage-your-health/preventive-services/preventive-service-overview.aspx) (Beginning in January 2011, changes to Medicare will take place, and most preventive services will be free from cost-sharing.)

Top health issues among African-American and Hispanic/Latino populations: [www.cdc.gov/omhd/Topic/MinorityHealth.html](http://www.cdc.gov/omhd/Topic/MinorityHealth.html)

- For African-Americans: [www.cdc.gov/omhd/Populations/BAA/BAA.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/omhd/Populations/BAA/BAA.htm)
- For Hispanics/Latinos: [www.cdc.gov/omhd/Populations/HL/HL.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/omhd/Populations/HL/HL.htm)

Adult Vaccinations: [adultvaccination.com/](http://adultvaccination.com/)

AARP and Walgreens Wellness Tour: Free Health Screenings: [www.walgreens.com/topic/health-screenings/bus-tour.jsp](http://www.walgreens.com/topic/health-screenings/bus-tour.jsp)

Where to find low-cost or free health care clinics: [findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/](http://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/)

Find a Flu Shot: [www.lungusa.org/lung-disease/influenza/flu-clinic-locator/](http://www.lungusa.org/lung-disease/influenza/flu-clinic-locator/)

### Mammography

- Find a free or low-cost mammogram: [apps.nccd.cdc.gov/cancercontacts/nbccedp/contacts.asp](http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/cancercontacts/nbccedp/contacts.asp)
- Finding certified mammography locations: [www.fda.gov/Radiation-EmittingProducts/MammographyQualityStandardsActandProgram/ConsumerInformation/ucm113962.htm](http://www.fda.gov/Radiation-EmittingProducts/MammographyQualityStandardsActandProgram/ConsumerInformation/ucm113962.htm)
- Answers to all your questions about mammography: [womenshealth.gov/faq/mammograms.cfm](http://womenshealth.gov/faq/mammograms.cfm)



### Colorectal Cancer

- Find Free or Low-Cost Colorectal Screening Clinics: [www.cdc.gov/cancer/crccp/contacts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/crccp/contacts.htm)
- Colorectal Cancer Overview: [www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Detection/colorectal-screening](http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Detection/colorectal-screening)
- Screening Tests At-a-Glance: [www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/pdf/SFL\\_inserts\\_screening.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/pdf/SFL_inserts_screening.pdf)
- Colorectal Cancer Screening – Testimonials: [www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/basic\\_info/stories.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/basic_info/stories.htm)

### Cholesterol

- How and Where to Get Cholesterol Tested: [www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=541](http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=541)
- Cholesterol Fact Sheet: [www.cdc.gov/cholesterol/docs/ConsumerEd\\_Cholesterol.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/cholesterol/docs/ConsumerEd_Cholesterol.pdf)

### Blood Pressure

- Where to Get Blood Pressure Tested: Your local pharmacy may have free blood pressure testing machines in their store. [Find a store near you.](#)
- All about Blood Pressure: [www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=2114](http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=2114)
- High Blood Pressure Fact Sheet: [www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/docs/ConsumerEd\\_HBP.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/docs/ConsumerEd_HBP.pdf)
- How to Prevent High Blood Pressure: [www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/what\\_you\\_can\\_do.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/what_you_can_do.htm)