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Investing in your health: preventative care.

(BYLINE)

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From a certain perspective, you're likely already practicing a good amount of preventative care every day without thinking about it. Washing your hands, keeping track of your menstrual cycle, and getting your regular flu shot are all examples of maintaining good health. But what else can we be doing proactively to ensure we're healthy and fighting off certain disease?

For the general population, health screenings are recommended based on demographics (such as age, sex, and race) and any pre-existing conditions. A regular physical exam, for example, might be recommended yearly for anyone who is in generally good health. More specific preventative tests and procedures may include:

- **Cancer screenings.** For certain types of cancer, such as breast, prostate, lung, colon, and cervical. The American Cancer Society has some common guidelines [here](#).
- **Immunizations.** To stay up to date on vaccines, protecting yourself and your community from illness.
- **Diabetes screenings.** To detect the presence of diabetes or prediabetes.

Although there are many general, broad-spectrum guidelines for [preventative care](#), everyone's experience will be different. For example, given my current demographics, the only regular preventative health screening recommended for me is a Pap test every few years. When we add my and my family's medical history into the determinants, the recommendations change.

Nuances in preventative care.

Last year, my mother had a melanoma removed from her arm. Prior to this, she has had several basal cell clusters removed within the past decade or so. Unfortunately, this runs in the family.

My mother's recent melanoma and basal cells bump up regular skin checks to a high priority. This is one of the many reasons why it's important to have a primary care provider, or PCP, whom you see regularly. As someone who knows you and your history, a PCP can make personalized health screening recommendations like mine.

Now, even though I see a dermatologist once a year, I pay attention to my skin as well as I can at home too. I keep an eye out for changes and go a little crazy with the zinc oxide baby sunscreen.

So, knowing your family history in a certain area – be it a skin condition or a heart condition – may affect how you personally approach preventative care.

What we can do at home.

In addition to tests and screenings at the doctor's office, there are plenty of ways to support your preventative care in the comfort of your own home. These can include everyday steps like keeping up with exercise and a healthy diet. However, doctors may recommend:

- [Skin checks](#)
- [Breast self-exams](#)
- [Testicular self-exams](#)
- [Weight and BMI measuring](#)

As we all know, life only seem to get busier and busier as the years go by. So, when it comes to actually visiting a doctor for preventative medical exams and screenings, we may tend to brush these important appointments off and delay. But good health is something we take for granted until we get sick. Investing in our wellness with preventative care is a vital step, and there's a good combination of at-home and in-office practices for every individual.

It's always a good idea to reach out to a primary care physician if you have any questions about preventative care and what might be right for you.