



Your Health & Well-Being



With Preventive Screenings, You Can Curb Serious Health Problems

by George Andrews, M.D.

(NAPSA)—About half of American adults suffer with at least one chronic condition, such as heart disease, cancer or diabetes, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). However, many of these conditions are preventable or can be detected early through check-ups and screenings, which often-times are free or covered at low costs by most health plans.

Being proactive by regularly taking advantage of the availability of preventive tests can decrease trips to the doctor or the emergency room and help detect chronic conditions before they become serious and require expensive treatment. To encourage their members, many health insurers offer rewards, such as free or discounted medications, for taking these preventive tests. Some plans also help make it easy for members to have the screenings by setting up appointments for them or providing home test kits.

However, despite these benefits, there is concern that adults aren't getting the preventive care they need for lifelong health and well-being. Here are four key areas where Humana suggests you get preventive care:

1) Cancer. Fewer than half of adults over age 50 are up to date with screenings for colorectal cancer. However, estimates suggest that a screening, such as a colonoscopy—recommended every 10 years by the CDC—could help save more than 18,000 lives annually from colorectal cancer, the second-leading cause of U.S. cancer-related deaths.

Additionally, recent studies found that only half of eligible women in the U.S. get their recommended annual mammogram. Mammograms lower the risk of dying from breast cancer by 35 percent in women over the age of 50.

2) Diabetes. Diabetes, which affects 24 million Americans, is the leading cause of heart disease, stroke, blindness, kidney failure



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and lower-extremity amputation. With tests available to monitor for cholesterol, blood sugar, blood pressure, blindness and foot issues, it is easier than ever to diagnose diabetes and reduce the progression of related complications.

3) Heart and Stroke. Heart disease and stroke are the first and third-leading causes of death, respectively, also accounting for a large number of disabilities for Americans. Fortunately, screenings have helped reduce death rates for both conditions by more than 20 percent since 1999. Cardiovascular screenings every five years to test cholesterol, lipid and triglyceride levels can help detect conditions leading to a heart attack or stroke. It is also important to eliminate smoking, a direct contributor to heart disease and stroke. Today, many health plans like Humana offer help with smoking cessation.

4) Mind/Body. On average, adults with serious mental illnesses live 25 years shorter than their counterparts without these illnesses, which are largely due to preventable conditions. Depression screenings are just one service designed to help monitor for serious mental health conditions. Counseling for alcohol and drug abuse—both of which can lead to a wide range of physical, mental and social problems—is also available.

George Andrews, M.D., is the Corporate Chief of Quality at Humana. A former Fulbright scholar, Andrews is board certified in the areas of internal medicine and cardiovascular disease. Humana Inc., headquartered in Louisville, Kentucky, is a leading health care company that offers a wide range of insurance products and health and wellness services that incorporate an integrated approach to lifelong well-being.