

**MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR HEALTH CARE TODAY**



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**Overview**

- Learn to get the care you need and become an active member of your health care team.



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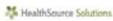
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**Objectives**

- Improve health care decision-making
- Use medical system appropriately
- Use resources to improve health outcomes



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## Active health care consumers

- Use the health care system wisely
- Understand health benefits
- Recognize reliable health information
- Understand preventive care recommendations
- Use medications safely
- Reduce risks of medical errors
- Use Personal Health Records



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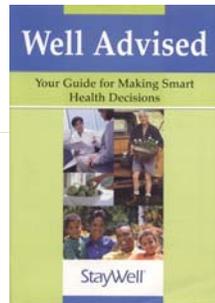
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## Use health care wisely

Be an active, prudent consumer...

...know about common health problems and how to handle them



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## Use health care wisely

### Situation 1

*You have had headaches for years. Your most recent headaches feel more severe. They occur two to three times a month and cause blurred vision that last about 3 – 5 minutes. This is followed by nausea that lasts about 30 minutes. There is no unusual stress or other illness at this time.*

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## Use health care wisely

Be an active, prudent consumer...  
...understand 'point of entry'



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## Urgent Care or Emergency Care

### Examples of urgent care situations

- Severe sore throat
- Sprains and strains
- Ear or eye infection
- Unexplained fever

### Examples of emergency situations

- Uncontrolled bleeding
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain or squeezing sensation in the chest
- Suspected overdose of medication or poisoning
- Sudden paralysis or slurred speech
- Severe burns
- Broken bones

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## Use health care wisely

Be an active, prudent consumer...

...know treatment options



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## Use health care wisely

### What to look for in a primary care doctor

- Has expertise and personal skills you want
- Helps you feel comfortable and confident
- Listens well
- Takes time to explain
- Engages you in decision-making



*Find a match – It's okay to change!*

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## Use health care wisely

### If you don't have a primary care physician, ask the following questions:

- Is s/he accepting new patients?
- Does this physician accept your medical insurance plan?
- What is the doctor's special field of practice?
- What are the office hours?
- Where should you receive care during non-office hours?
- If you call the office with a medical question, can you speak with the doctor?
- How far in advance do you need to make an appointment?

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## Use health care wisely

### Prepare for office visits

- Write down today's concerns



*70% of a doctor's diagnosis is from what you tell them*

- Have current list of medications
- Update health history
- Bring a friend or family member along

→ *What is the average time with the physician in an office visit?*

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## Use health care wisely

### Request medical records

- Patients have the right to see and copy their medical records under federal law



*How do you access them?  
Why would you want to?*

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## Use health care wisely

### Why read medical records?

- Involves patients in their health care
- Improves patient-doctor relationship
- Helps reduce risk of medical errors
- Patients may request providers to correct their record under certain situations



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## Personal Health Records

Most people have their health information in multiple places, at home, in their doctor's or therapist's offices, and anywhere they've been hospitalized.

A Personal Health Record (PHR) can help keep all of this information in one place, making it easier to find and share with others such as specialists or family members.

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## Personal Health Records

### Getting Started

- Names and phone numbers of people who should be contacted in case of emergency
- Names, addresses, and phone numbers of your doctors, including specialists and dentists
- Health insurance information, like the name of your insurance company and key phone numbers for service
- Current medications and dosages
- Allergies (to foods, drugs and other substances)
- A list and dates of significant illnesses and surgical procedures
- Results from recent doctor visits
- Important tests results, eye and dental records, immunization records

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## Understand health benefits



- Become informed about your health benefits to reduce health and financial risks
- Call your health plan customer service representative or human resources department with questions

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## Understand health benefits

A quality health plan can be defined as the extent to which patients get the care they need in a manner that most effectively protects or restores their health.

This includes:

- timely access to care
- getting treatment that medical evidence has found to be effective
- getting appropriate preventive care

*Note: Read the member handbook or talk to your employer to understand what services the plan will pay for and what it doesn't pay for.*

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## Understand health benefits

### Make use of all health benefits offered

- EAP
- Nurse line
- Care managers
- Flexible spending accounts
- Health savings accounts
- Preventive exams
- Health promotion programs



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## Reliable health information

### Where to look for good information

- Government clearinghouses and information centers [www.firstgov.gov](http://www.firstgov.gov)
- Associations and voluntary organizations
- Physicians, nurses, dietitians and other credentialed health professionals
- Consumer groups
- Reliable Web sites



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## Reliable health information

Not all sites are created equal. Having a critical eye is your responsibility.



### Web sites

- Check source of information
- Know if site is educational or retail
- Know who is paying for the site
- Know when the site was last updated
- Check that site is reviewed by experts
- Be aware of site's privacy policy

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## Credible Information



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## Preventive care

What is preventive care?

- Assessing health risks
- Health education counseling
- Screening tests
- Immunizations



*Do you keep medical records on each family member?*

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## Preventive care

- Prevent health problems before they occur
- Detect health problems early
- Manage chronic conditions



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## Preventive care

### Situation 2

*You just turned (your next milestone: 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, etc.) and have not been to the doctor for a "preventive care visit" for 5 years. What exams, procedures, or other activities should you expect at your next visit?*

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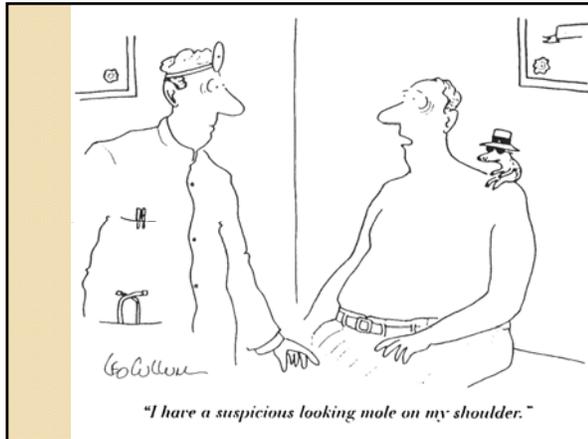
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## Preventive care guidelines

- Check your benefits plan for coverage
- Guidelines vary by age, sex and health condition
- Make appointments as needed to meet recommendations
- Maintain records on medical history, preventive exams and immunizations
- Use a reminder system

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## Medication safety

- Understand your medications
  - ✓ Name
  - ✓ Purpose
  - ✓ How to take
  - ✓ When to take
  - ✓ Side effects
  - ✓ What to do if you miss a dose
- Check for possible drug interactions
- Store properly
- Check expiration dates
- Find a pharmacy you like and use it consistently
- Ask pharmacists questions





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## Medication safety

### Proper disposal of unused medication

- Take them out of their original containers and mix them with an undesirable substance, such as used coffee grounds or kitty litter. The medication will be less appealing to children and pets.
- Put them in a sealable bag, empty can, or other container to prevent the medication from leaking or breaking out of a garbage bag.
- When in doubt about proper disposal, talk to your pharmacist.




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## Medication safety

### Generic vs Brand Name Drugs

- What are generic drugs?
- Are generic drugs as safe and strong as brand name drugs?
- Why are generic drugs less expensive?
- Does every brand name drug have a generic counterpart?
- What is the best source of information about generic drugs? [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)




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## Reduce medical errors

*Medical errors occur when a planned part of medical care doesn't work out or when the wrong plan was used. This can happen in hospitals, nursing homes and in your home.*

Examples of medical errors are:

- A wrong medicine is prescribed or taken.
- Too much medicine is taken.
- Mistakes are made before, during, or after surgery.
- The wrong condition is treated.

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## Reduce medical errors

- Speak up if you have questions or concerns
- Pay attention to the care you're receiving
- Educate yourself about your diagnosis and treatment plan
- Ask a trusted family member or friend to be your advocate
- Know your medications
- Use quality hospitals and clinics
- Participate in all your treatment decisions

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## Health Care Quality

**Quality care is:**

- Doing the right thing
- At the right time
- In the right way
- To achieve the best possible results

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## Health Care Quality



### Finding the right balance

- Avoiding underuse (not doing an age-appropriate screening)
- Avoiding overuse (performing tests that a patients doesn't need)
- Eliminating misuse (providing medications that may have dangerous interactions)

Check out [www.ahrq.gov](http://www.ahrq.gov)

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## Factors that Influence Health

|              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| Lifestyle    | 53% |
| Environment  | 19% |
| Heredity     | 18% |
| Medical Care | 10% |



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## Activated Health Care Consumer

### What can we do?

- Use self care resources
- Choose necessary and appropriate care
- Partner with your physician
- Know your health insurance benefits
- Take medications as directed
- Recognize reliable health information
- Make wise lifestyle choices

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**Activated Consumer**

Protect your health by taking an active role in your health care.



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Thank you for attending.

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