

# Your Health Matters

## HEALTHY AGING, HEALTHY LIVING

Older adults can protect their health with important preventive services like screenings, immunizations, and counseling to prevent the onset or manage the progression of chronic disease. Most of these services are offered during visits to a health care provider, and are covered by nearly all insurance plans, including Medicare and Medicaid. Yet fewer than half of adults age 65 or older are up-to-date with core preventive services.

Senior adults who get recommended preventive services and make healthy lifestyle choices are more likely to stay healthier and function independently longer. Preventive services help lower health risks, prevent or delay chronic disease, and reduce medical care costs.

Health screenings are a very important preventive service. Screenings look for diseases before they cause symptoms. When things like diabetes, osteoporosis, breast cancer and colorectal cancer are found early, they are easier to treat. Which screenings a person needs depends on their age, gender, family medical history, and risk factors.

The best advice for senior adults is to schedule an annual wellness visit to talk to a health care provider about which screenings and preventive services are recommended.

Before getting screenings, senior adults should ask their health care provider:

- Can you describe the test and explain why I need it? What will it show about my health?
- Will my insurance cover the cost? If not, how much will I need to pay?
- How should I prepare for the test? (for example: fasting, shower)
- Will there be any side effects?
- When will I learn the results of the test?

Senior adults should ask the health care provider to clearly explain the test results and provide a written copy. They may want to invite a spouse or adult child to accompany them to learn about the test results, to make sure they clearly understand the results and the next steps.

Screenings and wellness visits are very important pieces to living a healthy lifestyle. Senior adults also need to make healthy choices on a daily basis – choices to eat right, stay active, get plenty of sleep, and avoid unhealthy habits like smoking, overeating or using tobacco.

Because your health matters! ■



*Linda Harman*