

## **It's important to complete your annual physical and wellness visit**

Living a healthy life starts with your preventive care. Many people think an annual wellness visit and a physical are one and the same. Although the two have some things in common, their overall purpose is different.

### **What's the difference between your annual physical and wellness visit?**

An annual physical exam includes a:

- Head-to-toe exam
- Blood sugar test
- Cholesterol test

This visit is a good time to review your medications and/or health concerns. Your plan covers this visit once per calendar year.

A wellness visit includes a:

- Blood pressure check
- Height and weight measurement
- Body mass index (BMI) test

Your plan covers this visit once per calendar year. Take control by scheduling your annual physical and wellness visit early in the year to give you the most time to take action. You and your primary care provider (PCP) can work as a team to create a preventive care plan to help you stay as healthy as possible. You may also ask your PCP to combine your annual physical and wellness visits into 1 convenient annual care appointment.

### **How to prepare for your annual physical and wellness visit**

The doctor you see for your wellness visit will want to know who's part of your health care team. They may also want to work closely with other health care professionals involved in your care. Therefore, you should be ready to give the person conducting your visit a list of your current health care providers, including their contact information and their field of specialty.

Keeping track of all the vitamins, minerals, herbal supplements and prescription medications you take can be a daunting task, but your doctor will want to know about all of them. Getting a full list of all of your medications can help the doctor spot potential drug interactions that could be harmful to your health, and they will also want to ensure you have a complete understanding of each medication, what it's for and any potential side effects. Make a list, including how often you take each medication and the dosage.

When you are prepared, your annual wellness visit can be more than just a doctor's appointment. It is your opportunity to help take charge of your health and ensure you're on the right path to living the life you want.

### **Creating a wellness plan**

After completing all tests and assessments, your physician can assess your current health status and work with you to develop a plan to help meet your future health goals. That plan can address both how to help treat your current conditions and how to help prevent future health problems. If you have any risk factors for developing new conditions, your doctor may give you some options for managing those risks.

In addition, you can talk about other preventive care or screening tests you might need in the future. The doctor can not only help to set up a schedule for these services but may also discuss treatment options for any newly diagnosed conditions.

It's this portion of the annual wellness visit that many people find most helpful, so be prepared to get the most out of it by developing a list of questions you would like to ask at the appointment. Unlike a standard doctor appointment, the bulk of an annual wellness visit is generally spent in conversation, so your doctor may have more time than usual to listen to your concerns and answer your questions. It is your opportunity to help take charge of your health and ensure you're on the right path to living the life you want.