

Medicare Advantage  
preventive care benefits

# Your Passport to Health Guide



Regence BlueShield serves select counties in the state of Washington and is an Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

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## Preventive services list

Use the list below to talk to your doctor about preventive health services or screenings you may need. Add the date to those services you've already received; cross out the ones you don't need. Use the blank spaces to add services received that aren't listed.

Service	Date
Flu shot	
Annual wellness visit	
Colorectal cancer screening	
Breast cancer screening	
Bone mineral density test	
Diabetes screening	
Diabetic eye exam	
Diabetic test that monitors how kidneys are functioning	
Diabetic blood sugar monitoring test (HbA1c)	

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## Making healthy choices

There are many day-to-day choices you can make to stay healthy, live longer and maintain or improve your quality of life.

### **Eat healthy**

Eat a variety of fruits, vegetables, protein (like meat, fish or beans) and whole grains. Limit your intake of processed foods, sodium and saturated fat. Watch out for hidden sugar in prepared or processed foods, even the sugars with healthy-sounding names. They'll be listed in the ingredient list with names like:

Sucrose

Agave nectar

Fructose

Barley malt

Dextrose

Cane juice

Maltodextrin

Corn syrup

### **Sleep well**

Get seven to eight hours of sleep. Set a bedtime routine and turn off the TV and power down devices at least 30 minutes before bedtime.

### **Maintain a healthy weight**

Watch your portion sizes, and try to balance the number of calories you eat with the number you burn through exercise.

New to exercising? See our tips on the next page to help you get started.

## Exercise

Regular exercise increases strength and flexibility, improves bone health, and helps you prevent and/or manage chronic health conditions. It's easy to get started, but talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.

**Find your favorite.** Make a habit of walking, hiking, biking, swimming or yoga. Being active is easier and more fun when you love what you're doing.

**Set a goal.** Get 20 to 30 minutes of moderate physical activity five or six days a week. You can break this into 10-minute chunks if you need to.

**Keep an activity log.** And reward yourself when you reach your weekly or monthly goals.

**Limit excuses.** Sometimes life gets in the way, but more often than not, we get in our own way. Figure out a plan ahead of time for different times, locations and activities you can do when you find yourself saying there's "no time," you're "too tired" or it's "too wet/cold/hot outside."

**Join a gym or fitness class.** Your Medicare Advantage plan includes a no-cost membership to a fitness club or exercise center near you. To sign up, visit **www.SilverandFit.com** or call **1-888-797-8086** (TTY: 711), Monday to Friday, 5 a.m. to 6 p.m. Pacific time.

## **Manage stress**

Meditation and deep-breathing exercises have been shown to improve mood, enhance your overall sense of well-being, and increase information-processing and decision-making abilities. Talk to a health professional for additional help with managing stress.

## **Socialize**

Join a local book club. Play cards or chess with your neighbors. Volunteer at an animal shelter. Research suggests that regular social interaction helps with focus and memory, as well as slows or prevents cognitive decline.

## **Play games**

There are books, websites and mobile apps that offer games like sudoku, brain teasers, crossword puzzles and other entertaining mental exercises. Taking the time to exercise your brain can add new brain cells and solidify their connections.

## **Don't smoke**

If you smoke, talk with your doctor about getting help to quit. Take advantage of the tobacco use cessation counseling preventive benefit in your health plan (see page 19 for details).



## Keeping yourself well

### Preventing high blood pressure

Have your blood pressure checked regularly. Blood pressure should not exceed 120/80. It's important to review your own blood pressure results with your physician or care provider.

Take these steps to prevent or manage high blood pressure:

- Avoid smoking or using other tobacco products
- Maintain a healthy body weight
- Exercise regularly—at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week
- Eat a healthy diet that includes a lot of fruits and vegetables
- Limit your intake of caffeine and alcohol

Prescription medications (such as ACE inhibitors or ARBs) can help lower your blood pressure when lifestyle changes are not enough. These medications work best when you take them regularly and as directed by your doctor.

## Using medications safely

- Take your medications as prescribed by your doctor. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if the directions aren't clear.
- Let your doctor know if you encounter side effects, allergic reactions or difficulty with drug costs.
- Keep an up-to-date list of your medications, including vitamins and supplements.
- Pay attention to the color and shape of your pills. If they look different at refill, ask your pharmacist to double-check them.
- Store all medications in a safe place, including out of reach of visiting children.
- Dispose of expired or unused medications. Call your pharmacist to ask about safe disposal.

## Taking chronic medications

Chronic medications help prevent complications from conditions such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes. Even though you may not feel the benefits, it's important to take these medications as prescribed. Here are some helpful tips to help keep you on track:

- Ask your pharmacist for a 90-day supply of your medication so you don't have to visit the pharmacy as often.

- Or, use a mail-order pharmacy and have your medications conveniently delivered to you.
- Consider a medication reminder system, such as a pill organizer, watch alarm or smartphone app, so you don't accidentally skip a dose.
- Talk to your doctor to see if there are lower-cost alternatives to the medications you're taking.
- If you miss a refill on your chronic medications, you'll receive an automated reminder call with the option to be transferred to your pharmacy phone line for a refill.

## High-risk medications

Some medications become high-risk as you age, usually due to increased chance of side effects, such as low blood pressure, dizziness, confusion and sleepiness, that can lead to injuries, such as falls and fractures.

Some of the most common high-risk medications include estrogens, drugs for sleep like zolpidem, and antidepressants like amitriptyline, nortriptyline and paroxetine.

Ask your doctor if you're taking any high-risk medications and if there's a safer alternative. Switching to a safer medication could prevent any unwanted side effects or injuries.

## Preventing type 2 diabetes

Diabetes is a condition where glucose levels become too high because the body doesn't make enough insulin, or it uses it incorrectly (insulin resistance).

Complications from diabetes include vision problems, kidney damage, nerve damage, stroke and heart disease.

Maintaining a healthy weight, staying active, and eating a healthy diet is the best way to help prevent type 2 diabetes.

If you're at risk for diabetes, a diabetes screening can help your doctor know if you're diabetic, or possibly pre-diabetic.

Pre-diabetes is an early warning sign that you could develop type 2 diabetes. The first indication you may have pre-diabetes is if you have a blood sugar level between 100 to 125 mg/dL after a fasting plasma glucose test.

Medicare provides a diabetes prevention program benefit for eligible individuals with an indication of pre-diabetes. It's a structured education program that helps prevent the onset of type 2 diabetes by providing practical training in long-term dietary change, increased physical activity and behavior-change strategies for weight control. More information about this benefit can be found on page 16.

## Maintaining bladder control

Bladder control problems may develop in women during pregnancy or after childbirth or menopause. Some older men may experience urinary incontinence due to prostate problems. Other causes include pelvic trauma and spinal cord damage. Caffeine or some prescription and over-the-counter medications may also contribute.

Fewer than half the people with bladder control problems ever discuss it with their doctor, leaving it untreated. Be sure to talk with your doctor if you think you may have bladder control problems.

Other bladder control advice:

- Drink smaller amounts of fluid throughout the day.
- Avoid bladder-irritating foods such as acidic fruits, spicy foods, tomato-based products, artificial sweeteners and chocolate.
- Try eliminating caffeine or alcohol for a week to see if it helps.
- Do Kegel exercises. Squeeze your pelvic floor muscles as if you're trying to stop the flow of urine or hold in gas.



## Health management programs

### Case management services

If you or a family member is dealing with a serious illness or injury, you don't have to handle it alone. Our medical case managers are dedicated advocates who will find the answers you need so you can focus on the health of you and your family.

Your case manager will:

- Provide information about your condition, illness or injury
- Help you navigate the health care system and make informed treatment decisions
- Support your doctor's treatment plan
- Ensure that you get the most from your benefits

### Disease management program

If you have diabetes or heart disease, managing your condition is a good way to maintain or improve your quality of life. Our disease management program provides clinical and educational support to help you build the skills you need to reach your health goals. We also communicate with your doctor as a part of your health care team.

**Our health management programs provide phone-based support services to our members at no cost. For more information about our health management programs, call 1-866-543-5765.**



## Preventive care benefits

This section contains information about preventive services offered under your Medicare Advantage plan. Review these services with your doctor so that you get the health advice and preventive care that is recommended for you.

### “Welcome to Medicare” preventive visit

#### **Who is eligible?**

All people with Medicare.

#### **How often?**

This visit is covered only one time, and you must have the visit within the first 12 months of your Medicare eligibility.

Your doctor will:

- Record your medical history
- Record your height, weight and blood pressure
- Calculate your body mass index
- Give you a simple vision test
- Review your potential risk for depression
- Offer to talk with you about creating advance directives

## Annual wellness visit

### Who is eligible?

All people with Medicare.

### How often?

Once every calendar year.

Your doctor will:

- Perform a health risk assessment
- Review your medical and family history
- Develop or update a list of current providers and prescriptions
- Check your height, weight and blood pressure
- Detect any cognitive impairment
- Develop a screening schedule for preventive services
- Identify risk factors and recommend treatment options

## Annual physical exam

In addition to the annual wellness visit, your Medicare Advantage plan includes an annual physical exam once every calendar year.

*Note:* You may have to pay a copay if you also are treated for a new medical condition or monitored for an existing condition at the same time you are getting your physical.

## Bone mineral density test

Osteoporosis is a disease in which your bones become weak and brittle. There are no symptoms of osteoporosis and you may not know you have it until you break a bone. A bone mineral density test can help assess your risk for osteoporosis. In general, the lower your bone density, the higher your risk for a fracture.

### Who is eligible?

People at risk for osteoporosis and who have one of these medical conditions:

- A woman whose health care provider says she's estrogen-deficient and at risk for osteoporosis, based on her medical history and other findings
- A person with vertebral abnormalities as shown by an X-ray
- A person receiving steroid treatments
- A person with hyperparathyroidism (an excess of a hormone that can weaken your bones due to calcium loss)
- A person taking an osteoporosis drug

### How often?

Once every 24 months (more often if medically necessary).

## Breast cancer screening (mammograms)

Every woman is at risk for breast cancer, and this risk increases with age. Breast cancer usually can be successfully treated when found early. Your risk of developing breast cancer increases if you:

- Had breast cancer in the past
- Have a family history of breast cancer
- Had your first baby after age 30
- Never had a baby

### Who is eligible?

Women age 40 and older. Women 35–39 qualify for one baseline mammogram.

### How often?

Once every calendar year.

## Cardiovascular behavioral therapy and screenings

High cholesterol increases your risk for heart attack and stroke.

A cardiovascular disease risk reduction visit includes:

- Screening for high blood pressure
- Encouraging aspirin use if appropriate
- Counseling to promote a healthy diet

### Who is eligible?

All people with Medicare.

### How often?

Once each year. Screening tests for cholesterol, lipid and triglyceride levels are covered once every five years.

## Colorectal cancer screening

Your doctor uses colorectal cancer screening tests to help find pre-cancerous polyps (growths in the colon) so they can be removed before they become cancerous.

### Who is eligible?

All people with Medicare 50 and older, but there's no minimum age for having a screening colonoscopy.

### How often?

- *Screening fecal occult blood test*—Once every 12 months
- *Screening flexible sigmoidoscopy*—Once every 48 months after the last flexible sigmoidoscopy or barium enema, or 120 months after a previous screening colonoscopy
- *Screening colonoscopy*—Once every 120 months (high risk every 24 months) or 48 months after a previous flexible sigmoidoscopy
- *Screening barium enema*—Once every 48 months (high risk every 24 months) when used instead of sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy

## Depression screening

### Who is eligible?

All people with Medicare.

### How often?

One depression screening per calendar year; screening must be done in a primary care setting.

## Diabetes prevention program

Provides education and training in long-term dietary change, increased physical activity, and problem-solving strategies to support weight loss and a healthy lifestyle (benefit available starting April 1, 2018).

### Who's covered?

People who are at risk for diabetes and meet these eligibility requirements:

- BMI of at least 25 (23 if self-identified as Asian)
- One of three pre-diabetic blood tests:
  - HgbA1c test with a value between 5.7 and 6.4 or
  - Fasting plasma glucose of 110 to 125 mg/dL or
  - 2-hour post-glucose challenge of 140 to 199 mg/dL
- No previous history of diabetes, except gestational diabetes

### How often is it covered?

Once-per-lifetime limit; no previous receipt of any Medicare diabetes prevention program services.

## Diabetes screening (fasting blood glucose test)

### Who is eligible?

People who are at risk for diabetes.

### How often?

Up to two diabetes screenings every 12 months, based on the results of your screening tests.

### Who's at risk?

You're considered at high risk if you have high blood pressure, dyslipidemia (history of abnormal cholesterol and triglyceride levels), obesity or a history of high blood sugar (glucose).

Medicare also covers these tests if you answer "yes" to two or more of the following questions:

- Are you 65 or older?
- Are you overweight?
- Do you have a family history of diabetes (parents, brothers or sisters)?
- Do you have a history of gestational diabetes (diabetes during pregnancy), or have you ever had a baby weighing more than 9 pounds?

## Diabetes self-management training

If you have been diagnosed with diabetes, Medicare covers educational training to help manage their diabetes and prevent complications. You must have a written order from a doctor or other health care provider.

## Obesity screening and counseling

### Who is eligible?

All people with Medicare may be screened for obesity. You are covered for intensive obesity counseling conducted in a primary care setting if you have a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or more.

### How often?

- One face-to-face visit each week for the first month
- One face-to-face visit every other week for months 2–6
- One face-to-face visit every month for months 7–12, if you lose 6.6 pounds during months 1–6

There are many other important preventive screenings that could save your life. Please talk to your doctor about scheduling the screenings that apply to you and your health risks.

## Alcohol misuse screening and counseling

### Who is eligible?

Adults who use alcohol but don't meet the medical criteria for alcohol dependency.

### How often?

One alcohol misuse screening per calendar year; up to four counseling sessions per calendar year from a qualified primary care doctor in a primary care setting.

## Cervical and vaginal cancer screening

### Who is eligible?

All women with Medicare.

### How often?

Pap test and pelvic exam once every 24 months, or once every 12 months for women at high risk and for women of child-bearing age who have had an exam that indicated cancer or other abnormalities in the past three years.

## Prostate cancer screening

### Who is eligible?

All men with Medicare over 50.

### How often?

- *Digital rectal examination*— Once per calendar year
- *PSA test*— Once per calendar year

## Tobacco use cessation counseling

### Who is eligible?

All people with Medicare who use tobacco.

### How often?

Medicare will cover up to eight face-to-face visits during a 12-month period. These visits must be provided by a qualified primary care doctor or practitioner in a primary care setting.

## Vaccinations

Flu, pneumococcal (pneumonia) infections and hepatitis B can be life-threatening to an older person. All people 65 and older should get flu and pneumococcal shots. People who are under 65 but have a chronic illness, including heart disease, lung disease, diabetes or end-stage renal disease (ESRD) (permanent kidney failure requiring dialysis or a kidney transplant), should get a flu shot. People at medium-to-high risk for hepatitis B should get hepatitis B shots.

### **Who is eligible?**

All people with Medicare are eligible for flu and pneumococcal shots. Certain people at medium or high risk for hepatitis B are eligible for hepatitis B shots.

### **How often?**

Flu shots are given once per flu season. There are two different pneumococcal shots that are each given only once, at least a year apart. Three shots are needed for complete protection against hepatitis B. Check with your doctor about when to get hepatitis B shots if you qualify to get them.



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*Source: American Academy of Family Physicians, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services*

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