

WELL BALANCED

- DECEMBER 2024 -
End of Year Wellness Check



MAINTAINING BEST HEALTH WITH A *Wellness Visit*

With six in ten Americans having at least one chronic disease and four in ten having at least two or more, the CDC reports chronic disease as the number one cause of death and disability in the United States. Behaviors such as smoking, poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and excessive alcohol use are contributors to the onset of many preventable chronic conditions. On top of that, many choose to only visit the doctor when feeling “sick,” rather than as a method of prevention.

If you want to take control of your health but you are not sure where to start, consider scheduling a wellness visit. A wellness visit is a time to discuss prevention strategies, receive preventive services, and allow for early detection of chronic disease and other illness. By completing wellness visits regularly, as part of your preventive care plan, you can improve your chances of staying healthy and well.

The intention of a wellness visit is to assess your overall health. A wellness visit is likely to include a review of your medical history, age- and gender-specific screenings and assessments, a physical examination, and health-specific education. The wellness visit is a comprehensive review of your health, assessing not only physical health but mental and emotional health as well. The frequency of your wellness visits can best be determined by your provider. Here are five ways you can advocate for your health before, during, and after your wellness visit.



Want more information on routine screenings?

Refer to the CDC for guidance and talk to your provider to find out what’s right for you.

» Prepare

A wellness visit can be an appointment packed with information. To prevent from feeling overwhelmed, it is helpful to plan. Prior to your wellness visit, take time to review your personal health history and your family health history. Be prepared to discuss any changes in health, any life changes (divorce, adoption, job change), and any differences in lifestyle habits. Bring a list of current allergies and medications and prepare any questions you might have. Plan to take notes or bring a friend or family member for support.

» Be Honest

To play an active role in your health care, being honest is key. It is important to communicate clearly and understand that your provider is a professional. Even if you feel shy or embarrassed about a health topic, being transparent with your provider will allow them to better support you. Open and honest communication will allow you and your provider to partner and make smart decisions about your health while building a relationship of trust.

» Ask Questions

When it comes to your health, your provider is your best resource. A wellness visit is an appropriate time to ask questions, even if they may feel insignificant. Refer to the list of questions you created to prepare for your wellness visit, and actively listen throughout your appointment. If you do not understand something or if you have concerns about your health or health care plan, ask! Practice self-advocacy by continuing to ask questions until you understand and feel satisfied with the plan moving forward.



Need help finding a provider?

Here are a few quick tips:

- Ask for recommendations from people you know and trust.
- Check with your insurance company to see who is in your network.
- Call to see who is accepting new patients.

» Use Your Resources

Most medical facilities offer patients access to their electronic medical records (EMR) through a patient portal. If you can, take advantage of this so you can keep track of test results, diagnoses, treatment plans, and medications. This information can also help you prepare for future appointments. Typically, a patient portal includes a messaging option, and this can be another way for you to ask questions and stay in touch with your care team outside of appointments. Additionally, consider virtual care as an option. Although not all care can be performed virtually, a virtual appointment can be a convenient way to meet with your provider, ask questions, and develop a plan.

» Follow Recommendations

To conclude your wellness visit, your provider is likely to make recommendations for the next steps. This might include scheduling appointments with other providers, completing future screenings or tests, implementing recommended lifestyle changes, or starting new medications. Other people on your care team may be helpful resources, too. Medical assistants, nurses, technicians, and pharmacists or other health care professionals may all assist with answering questions and supporting you through the process as you move forward with your care plan. It is important to follow your provider's recommendations and continue to ask questions along the way!

Resources

- » [About Chronic Diseases \(cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov)
- » [Talking With Your Doctor or Health Care Provider \(www.nih.gov\)](https://www.nih.gov)
- » [Advocate for Yourself at Medical Appointments \(psychologytoday.com\)](https://www.psychologytoday.com)

Sources

- <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/treatment-tests-and-therapies/benefits-of-telemedicine>
- <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.02.12.21251649v1.full>

