

# The Medical Minute: Make preventive care part of your 2014 health focus

January 10 2014, by Scott Gilbert

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At the conclusion of the holiday hustle and bustle, likely replete with unhealthy eating, many focus on health in the new year. In addition to eating right and getting more exercise, another resolution should be to seek the advice of a primary care provider to see what preventive care you should consider to keep you at optimal health.

Like many primary care providers, Dr. Cynthia Chuang, from Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center's Department of Medicine, stresses preventive care to her patients, an approach also emphasized by the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

Chuang said the medical community has traditionally focused on acute care and [chronic disease management](#).

"The focus of [preventive care](#) is to think about preventing illness before it happens," Chuang continued. "That is very important as we think about how prevalent and burdensome chronic diseases like diabetes and hypertension have become in our population—to think about what we can do to prevent those things from happening in the first place."

According to Chuang, the ACA is trying to provide broader coverage for [preventative health services](#) in an attempt to get more people to receive the preventive health services that are recommended by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force.

"One of the mandates of the ACA is that all private insurance companies

cover the recommended preventative services," she said. These services are offered without a copayment to encourage more people to use them.

Chuang emphasizes it is important to establish a relationship with a PCP to schedule routine visits and any necessary follow up care. The provider will determine the need for any additional testing or screenings dependent upon health conditions, risk factors and family history.

In addition to counseling services on the importance of physical exercise and healthy diet and advice against smoking, Chuang offers patients standard screenings and testing based on [age](#) and gender.

Starting at age 18, men and women should keep adult immunizations up to date, including a tetanus booster every 10 years and an annual flu shot.

For women, Chuang suggests pap smears starting at age 21. These are now recommended every three years with the exception of women who have had abnormal pap smears or risk factors for cervical cancer.

At age 40, women should begin receiving regular mammograms.

At age 50, both men and women should have a colonoscopy to check for colon cancer. With normal results, the procedure is not necessary for another 10 years.

At age 60, adults should receive a shingles vaccine to reduce the risk of the reactivation of the chickenpox virus that stays dormant in the nerve cells.

At 65, patients at a greater risk receive a pneumonia vaccine. Also at this age, women are generally tested for osteoporosis using a bone density screening.

The newest recommendation from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force is for adults ages 55-79 with a lengthy smoking history. An annual lung cancer screening via CAT scan of the chest is now recommended.

When male smokers reach age 65, they are screened for an abdominal aortic aneurysm via ultrasound.

**More information:** To learn more about preventive care benefits under the ACA, visit [www.healthcare.gov/what-are-my ... entive-care-benefits](http://www.healthcare.gov/what-are-my-...-entive-care-benefits).

To see a complete listing of U.S. Preventive Services Task Force preventive service recommendations, go to [www.uspreventiveservicestaskfo ... spstf/uspsabrecs.htm](http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskfo ... spstf/uspsabrecs.htm)

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

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