

# Patient access to online health action plans enhances rate of preventive care

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A large study demonstrated that health plan members who accessed their health information online and received timely alerts about potential gaps in care were more likely to receive preventive tests and screenings than those who did not use the service. The Kaiser Permanente study was published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

In the study, researchers analyzed the [electronic health records](#) of 838,638 Kaiser Permanente members in Southern California. About 40 percent of these members were users of the online Patient Action Plan, or oPAP, a secure, web-based system that provides access to personalized health information and emails members if they need preventive care. For example, the online tool flags the date of a patient's last [colorectal cancer screening](#) and the date of the next recommended screening. It also provides information about specific health conditions, such as links to smoking-cessation programs for smokers and to weight-management materials for members with elevated body mass index.

Researchers found that members who had online access to their health information were more likely to participate in certain preventive measures. For example, [patients](#) who used the online tool were 9 percent more likely to receive a mammogram and be screened for [colorectal cancer](#) than non-registered members. In addition, they were 6 percent more likely to receive a Pap smear and 12 percent more likely to schedule complete routine HbA1c testing for diabetes.

"Making sure patients receive appropriate tests and screenings is a

critical part of providing high-quality health care, but it can be challenging and time-consuming to get patients to follow through due to a variety of reasons," said the study's lead author Shayna L. Henry, PhD, of the Kaiser Permanente Southern California Department of Research & Evaluation. "Our study demonstrates that by creating a customized and personalized communication to patients about their care needs, health care providers can directly engage patients and close important gaps in care, particularly for preventive screenings for cancer."

The online tool is part of My Health Manager, Kaiser Permanente's online portal that provides [members](#) access to their [health information](#) and tools such as online appointment scheduling, prescription refill and secure email messaging with doctors. Kaiser Permanente patients in Southern California using the online Patient Action Plan tool logged more than 4 million page views in 2015.

"The success of the online tool is encouraging for the development of patient-enabled health-management tools within Kaiser Permanente and other health systems," Henry said.

Provided by Kaiser Permanente

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