

Encouraging Preventive Health Care

Key Facts

Preventive healthcare involves strategies to prevent illness or diagnose and treat early. Preventive health care includes immunizations and regular health or wellness checks. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and/or physical disabilities should receive the same preventive health care as the rest of the community, but this does not always happen.

According to the Disability in Oregon 2016 Annual Report on the Health of Oregonians with Disabilities, “families and support workers should work with the primary care provider (PCP) to ensure that people with disabilities are getting appropriate preventive health care.”



Immunizations

Vaccinations are important to help prevent the person and those around them, from getting a variety of serious contagious diseases. If the person has questions, encourage them to talk with their PCP.

An annual flu shot is an important preventive measure, especially to help protect people over the age of 65 and those with underlying health conditions. It is an option for everyone.

Another important vaccine to consider is the pneumococcal vaccine, which can help prevent some types of pneumonia, meningitis, and

Personal Medical History

An accurate record of a person’s medical history makes it easier for a doctor to know what preventive health care is needed. If the person has created a Personal Profile, this information can be added and should include:

- History of health conditions that run in the family
- Any food and medication allergies
- Other information that may be helpful for medical professionals
- The person’s medical provider may already have this information in their Electronic Health Record (EHR)



Check-ups and Screenings - How Often?

Adults and children with I/DD can have an annual health assessment with a Primary Care Provider (PCP), and the cost is covered by Medicaid. The doctor will check general health, medications, height, weight, and gather information on diet, and exercise habits.

Hearing and vision should be assessed every 3 to 5 years, and a dental check-up every 6 months.

Skin should be checked every year for sun spots or cancer. Some people with I/DD or physical disabilities may need support to help protect them from sun damage that could lead to skin cancer.

PCP’s can encourage screening for bowel/colon cancer or specific medical conditions that may result in colon cancer. This is recommended for all people over 50 and earlier for those with a family history of bowel or colon cancer.





Women's Health

All women need regular breast examinations, and women over 50 should have mammograms every 2 years, unless their doctor recommends a mammogram at an earlier age or with greater frequency, possibly due to family history. Women who are now or used to be sexually active should have a Pap smear every 3 to 5 years. Some women need to have regular bone density scans. The person and their medical team will discuss recommendations.

Families and support workers often need to help a woman understand these procedures and reassure her during the appointment. Provide support as needed.

For More Information:

Oregon Health Plan website: <https://www.benefits.gov/benefit/1334>

Check out this online resource on mammograms, which includes a PSA in Spanish: <https://www.acraccreditation.org/mammography-saves-lives>

You might be interested in these fact sheets:

- Different Types of Health Services
- Encouraging Preventative Health Care
- Supporting Healthy Aging

This fact sheet was created in June 2021.

The fact sheet contains general information only and does not take into account individual circumstances. It should not be relied on for medical advice. We encourage you to review the information in this fact sheet within the context of educational purposes and when appropriate, share it with your health professional to decide whether the information is right for you.

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Men's Health

Some conditions are more common in males with I/DD. Some boys have hormone deficiencies that impede puberty. The genitals may grow more slowly, hair may not grow on the face, and muscles may not develop. This condition is treatable. Some boys' testicles do not descend, so the doctor should check genitals every year. They should also check for signs of testicular cancer throughout adulthood. For men over 50, talk to the doctor about whether to do regular prostate screenings. Many men with I/DD will need support from family or support workers when they have a prostate screening or an examination of their genitals.

