



GBS HEALTH & WELLNESS

Clinical Corner

With Russell Vinik, MD
GBS Medical Director

You may hear the term “**preventive care**” used a lot in healthcare, but what is it? A simple definition would be: Routine health care that includes screenings, check-ups, and patient counseling to prevent illness, disease, or health problems.

All the different recommendations for preventive care can be confusing, so the easiest way to ensure you are getting the right preventive care is to see your healthcare provider regularly. Generally, healthy women should see their provider annually. Men would benefit from seeing a provider every other year from ages 19-39 and annually after age 40 or if they have increased risk factors for chronic conditions.

A full list of recommended preventive screenings is available at [HealthCare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov). In general health insurers are required to pay 100% of the costs of preventive care, even if you have a high-deductible health plan.

A few examples of preventive care are:

- › Evidence-Based Screening and Counseling-
- › Screening for depression, diabetes, cholesterol, cancers, HIV, sexually transmitted infection, counseling on drug and tobacco use
- › Colorectal cancer screening
- › Routine Immunizations
- › Preventive Screening for Women and Children
- › Well-woman visits, mammograms, child behavioral and developmental

Certainly, everyone is different and risk factors can change the need and frequency of some of these screenings and immunizations. Family history is one of the biggest risk factors we have for acquiring a disease. Lifestyle factors such as unhealthy diet, lack of fitness, or risky behaviors put us at higher risk of disease. Additionally, if you have one medical condition, it puts you at higher risk of others.

You are in the driver's seat for your preventive care. For example, for colorectal cancer screening, a colonoscopy is generally considered the best test for screening. However, several other less invasive tests are also effective. The "best test" is the one that gets done. So, don't be afraid to have an open discussion with your provider, if you are scared or unwilling to have a test, ask about alternatives.

Healthcare is all about preventive care. It is always better to prevent an illness than to treat one. Not all illnesses can be prevented, but when it can't be prevented it is always better to catch a disease early than after it has progressed. So, take the next step and schedule a preventive care visit with your provider.