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Preventive Health

Making wise health decisions

The health decisions you make for yourself and your family can influence your overall well-being, as well as the quality and cost of care. It's not always clear what choices are the best ones for you. Educating yourself on your choices can make you a more confident decision-maker. In general, people who work with their providers to make health decisions are happier with the care they receive, and the results.

Whether you are seeking ways to develop healthy habits to improve your health or you were recently diagnosed with a condition, you have the right to ask questions and make your own decisions. Understanding your condition and the different risks or options is an important step toward making the right choice. Having an open discussion about your treatment involves a balance between listening to the medical facts and considering your personal values.

You are more likely to feel better about the decision if it aligns with your needs and values. Your beliefs, fears, lifestyle, and experiences all play a role in decision-making. Listening to a professional medical opinion while voicing your personal values and experiences paves a healthy path toward communication with your medical provider. It's also acceptable to get a second opinion after receiving advice that you aren't quite sure about.

Follow the steps below when you have a health decision to make.

What are your choices? Make it clear to your provider that you want to be involved in the decision making. Ask them to clearly outline your choices.

Get the facts. Learn about each option through resources like the library, your provider, and reliable websites you can trust. Make sure the information you collect is based on sound medical research.

What do you think? Sort out the information you've gathered and make a list of pros and cons to discuss with your provider. Consider your own needs and values and what you consider to be the best possible outcome. Think about who or what may be affected by your decision such as yourself, your friends and family, or your work life.

Try on a decision. Write down the expected outcome for each option and ask your provider if your expectations are reasonable. Be sure to discuss side effects, pain, recovery time, cost, or long-term outcomes of each option. Then see if you still feel it's the best choice for you.

Make an action plan. Once you make a decision, find out what you can do to have the best possible outcome. What steps do you need to take next? Think positively about your decision and follow your provider's advice to maximize your odds of success.

Talk with your primary care provider (PCP) about your current health risks or conditions and what you can do to address them. If you currently do not have any health risks or conditions, speak with your provider about preventive health options that are right for you so you can continue living a healthy, happy life. If you do not have a PCP, consider finding one. Having a PCP is important for maintaining health and preventing and managing serious diseases.

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Showing up to a medical appointment prepared to share your questions and concerns can make things easier. Use the fields below to take notes before and during your appointment.

What is the condition or concern? List the symptoms or concerns you need to share with your medical provider.

What are your choices? List your medical provider's advice and recommendations.

Do you understand your choices? List your medical provider's facts, evidence, and support for their recommendations. Discuss side effects, pain, recovery time, cost, and long-term outcomes of each option.

What do you think? List the pros and cons of your choices.

What is your plan? Make your decision and plan the next steps.

What other questions do you have? Use the space below to jot down other questions or concerns you have.

The CDC offers reliable information in this alphabetical medical condition [index](#).
Use this [tool](#) to make sure you and your family are up to date on preventive services.
Learn how to be your own [health advocate](#).

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