

# **Healthcare as you age: Why keeping regular appointments matters**

**By Lucas Teynor, D.O.**

As you get older, taking care of your health is a lot like taking care of a car or a house. If you only pay attention when something breaks, fixing it can be expensive and stressful. But if you keep up with regular checkups and maintenance, problems can be found early and fixed before they get serious. Your body works the same way.

## **Regular checkups help prevent big problems**

Most people wouldn't drive a car for years without routine maintenance and then be surprised when it breaks down. Visiting your doctor on a consistent schedule works the same way for your health. These check-ups can catch problems early, like high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, depression or memory changes, and can also screen for substance use issues, from alcohol and nicotine to other habits (e.g., kratom) that affect both your health and finances. Many of these conditions don't show symptoms at first, yet if left untreated, they can lead to serious events like a life-altering stroke or devastating heart attack.

Studies show that adults who see their primary care provider consistently tend to stay healthier and may even live longer. Just as a trusted mechanic keeps a car running smoothly, a familiar doctor can help keep your body in top shape.

## **Managing ongoing conditions is like caring for your home**

If you own a house, you know how important it is to take care of the structure, electric and plumbing. Health conditions like heart disease, diabetes, or arthritis are similar. They usually don't go away, but with regular care, they can stay under control. Routine appointments help your doctor adjust medications, check labs and make sure your treatment is still working. Fixing small problems early is much easier than dealing with major damage later.

## **Staying up to date keeps you safe**

Healthcare visits with your provider also make sure you're up to date on important preventive care. This includes vaccines like the flu shot, pneumonia, shingles and tetanus boosters. Your doctor may also recommend screenings for cancer, bone strength, vision, hearing and fall risk. These checks help you stay safe, active and independent as you age.

## **What happens at a checkup**

At your appointment, your doctor may check your blood pressure, review your medications and ask about how you're feeling day to day. They may also talk with you about exercise, diet, sleep and safety at home. This is your chance to share any new symptoms, falls or concerns, even if they seem small.

### **How often should you go?**

Most adults should see their primary care provider at least once a year, even if they feel fine; this helps your healthcare team get to know you when you're healthy and be able to notice when you're not. Most insurance companies, Medicaid, and Medicare part B cover a free Annual Wellness Visit every year. Some people may need to go more often if they have ongoing health problems.

### **The Bottom Line**

Seeing your healthcare provider is a key part of staying healthy as you age. They get to know you, watch for early signs of disease, manage existing conditions and guide you toward a better quality of life. Staying connected with your provider helps you remain active, independent and in control of your health. If it's been a while since your last visit, don't wait, schedule an appointment today and take charge of your well-being.

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