

Physician Perspective:

Vol. 1 # 1

Health Tips

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A new school year represents a new beginning and a first time experience for many individuals. With this in mind, it is time to initiate new health habits and update existing ones.

It is time for the annual flu vaccination as flu season is just around the corner. It is also a good time to make certain that children have received all their immunizations and that all adult immunizations are up to date. Check with your health care provider to determine what you need to maintain your health.

Fall is coming with all its beautiful colors. Maintain your vision with an eye examination that includes a check for glaucoma (measures the pressure within the eye) for those over 40. The examination should also include a slit lamp examination of the retina (looks for blood vessel changes due to high blood pressure or diabetes and early signs of macular degeneration).

Summer is over and now is a good time to have a total body skin check after all that sun exposure.

Time has a way of slipping by and although one's health is of utmost importance, many of us have the uncanny ability to assign low priority to taking care of it. So let this serve as a reminder that your blood pressure should be checked once per year especially if you are over 40. Once you reach 20, cholesterol and triglycerides need to be checked every 5 years, and a baseline cardiogram is good to have on record for comparison at a future time. Have you gained weight? Is your blood pressure elevated? Is there a family history of diabetes? If so an eight hour fasting blood sugar should be done once per year.

An examination for colon cancer, colonoscopy, is in order at age 40 if there is a family history of the disease or at age 50 if no cancer history. This needs to be repeated every 5 to 10 years if the study is normal. The frequency, however, is between you and your health care professional.

Women, if you are sexually active or 21 years of age, it is time to begin pelvic examinations and pap smears. These should continue throughout life at a frequency of one to two years to be determined by you and your health care provider. Don't forget the monthly self-breast examination and that mammograms become an annual event at about age forty depending on family and health history. Examinations for bone density begin at menopause.

Men, do you have a family history of prostate cancer or a mother with BRAC positive breast cancer? If so, prostate examinations should begin at age 40, otherwise age 50. Let's not forget our teenage sons. Testicular cancer is a disease of the young(15-40 year old men). All young men should be taught how to perform monthly self-testicular exams at age 15. Found early, testicular cancer is curable, found late, testicular cancer is devastating.

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