healthy times
Take control of your health.

Connecting Generations

What to Expect at 2 Key Screenings

Refresh Your Exercise Routine

More than 6.8 million Medicare members in the nation enrolled in a Blue Cross Blue Shield plan*

*Data attributed to all Blue Cross Blue Shield Association plans across the country, CMS, Barclays Research, 2016, Quarter 4, Brand Protection Financial Services Reporting
Intergenerational connections are good for all ages

Research suggests that everyone benefits when all ages live together. Children hear the wisdom of older family members. Older adults stay active while keeping up with younger family. AARP even recommends that different generations travel together. That way, children can have quality time with grandparents, and families can share traditions.

Connecting through community programs

Many communities offer programs that bring seniors and youth together. For example, some assisted living homes have children’s day care programs in the same building. Seniors and children can interact through story time, songs, and crafts. Or young volunteers may teach seniors computer skills, while seniors provide tutoring or mentorship. Seniors and young people can also serve together in programs focused on the arts or the environment.

Making friends, improving lives

These activities allow people of all ages to share their talents and resources. Seniors spend more time with others and develop friendships. They also keep their minds active. Young people do better in school and improve their social skills. And these programs help young and old see each other more positively.

Sometimes aging can make a person feel lonely or anxious. By interacting with younger people, seniors can find companionship, assistance, and a new perspective. Intergenerational programs are an excellent way to learn new things and make new friends—no matter their age.

Support and resources

Stop by your local senior center to see what community programs are offered. Getting involved is great for the mind and body. If you need help with behavioral health issues, such as anxiety or depression, just call the number on the back of your ID card.
Why preventive cancer screenings are important

Do you need a mammogram?  
A mammogram is a low-dose X-ray designed to locate tumors that are often too small to be felt during a breast self-exam. Conventional mammography records X-ray information on film, while digital mammography creates a digital computer image. Tomosynthesis takes digital mammograms one step further. The test takes multiple images from many angles. A computer puts them together to make a 3D image of each breast.  
Mammograms don’t prevent breast cancer, but they can help detect it earlier, when it is easier to treat. Mammography should not replace self-exams or routine clinical exams.

Understanding urinary incontinence
Urinary incontinence (UI) is the loss of urine control. The problem can be short- or long-term and is often caused by other health issues, such as bladder infections. UI is more common in older people, but it is not a normal part of aging. Symptoms include:
• Pain when filling the bladder or urinating
• Stream of urine gets weaker and weaker
• Urinating more often
• Needing to rush to the restroom or not making it in time
• Abnormal urination or changes related to stroke, spinal cord injury, or multiple sclerosis
• Consistent urine leakage
• Frequent bladder infections

If you’re experiencing any symptoms, talk with your doctor about urinary incontinence. He or she may refer you to a urologist or urogynecologist who specializes in urinary tract diseases.

Your partner in health
If you ever have questions about screenings or any other health issue, talk with your doctor. Find one at www.bluecrossma.com/findadoctor.

What you can do Most people should have their first colonoscopy at age 50, and every 10 years thereafter. The American Cancer Society suggests women have routine mammograms starting at age 45. Remember, other screening options may be more appropriate. Check your health plan benefits and talk with your doctor about your individual risk factors and what screening schedule is best for you.

Colorectal cancer risks and screening
Colonoscopy is an important cancer screening. This test, and other screenings such as FitKits or stool cards, can find colorectal cancer early, when it can be more effectively treated. It can also find polyps (abnormal growths) within the colon so that they can be removed before they turn into cancer.  
Colorectal cancer is the second-leading cancer killer among Americans. There are several lifestyle-related factors that have been linked to colorectal cancer, including:
• Diet: High-fat, low-fiber diets with lots of red and processed meat put you at a higher risk. Eating more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains has been linked to a lower risk.
• Weight: Being overweight raises the risk in men and women.
• Exercise: Physical inactivity may increase your chances of developing colorectal cancer. Consider discussing an exercise routine with your doctor.
A special THANK YOU to Norwood and Westwood COAs!

Reaching across generations
Norwood and Westwood Councils on Aging bring together older adults and youth

Making connections with younger generations is a shared priority at both the Westwood and Norwood Councils on Aging (COAs). Each of these councils has robust intergenerational programs that allow older adults and young people to connect and learn from one another.

Making lunch, making friends
At the Norwood COA, seniors and teens get together for lunch through a cooperative with the alternative high school TEC Phoenix Academy in Walpole. Through this program, students in the culinary arts program prepare and serve lunch at the COA four days a week throughout the school year. Seniors enjoy a healthy soup, entrée, and dessert and get to know the students.

“It’s also a great learning opportunity for the students. “They get to do everything from preparing food and creating menus to learning the proper way to serve and set a table,” says Kerri McCarthy, executive director of the Norwood COA. “They also get to form
relationships with our seniors. It’s especially nice to watch the ones who are a little shy in the beginning develop their own comfort zone over the year.”

The program, now in its 10th year, serves more than 100 seniors every week. Each year, the program ends with a cookout that everyone enjoys.

The Norwood COA also offers many other programs, from tap dancing classes to knitting groups. McCarthy credits her group of volunteers with keeping the organization running smoothly. “I’m so grateful for our volunteers. We couldn’t do any of it without them,” she says.

From tots to teens
Just down the road, the Westwood COA also offers a wide variety of programs, from aerobics to Zumba. But some of the most popular are the intergenerational programs, which are underwritten by the Foundation for Westwood Education. These programs link seniors with kids of all ages, from preschoolers to teens.

“Our goal is to have children in the community meet the seniors when they’re young and then to keep connecting with them as they grow,” says Lina Arena-DeRosa, director of the Westwood COA.

This was the COA’s first year doing a farm-to-table program with preschool children at Powisset Farm in Dover. It was especially popular with both the seniors and the kids. “Every month we meet at the farm and do a different activity together. This month, we collected eggs and herbs and learned to make frittatas.”

Another popular program pairs seniors with fourth-graders at the Deerfield Grammar School. They get together for two hours a week to work on special projects and hear speakers from the community, such as the fire chief and K-9 police.

The COA also works with students at Thurston Middle School in Westwood every spring in a six-week program called Bridges Together. “We’ve worked with two fantastic teachers at the school, doing both music and art,” says Arena-DeRosa. “This year we did plaster hand castings to look at the difference in hands as they age. These programs are a great way to bring people of all ages in the community together.”

Volunteering strengthens body and spirit
Volunteering is good for you. Besides boosting self-esteem and well-being, volunteering may improve physical health, too. Research has found that people who volunteer have lower mortality rates than those who don’t. Studies also show that volunteers ages 60 and older report higher levels of physical functioning and lower levels of depression.

Why is this? Meaningful relationships, being productive, and keeping active are vital to healthy aging—and are part of being a volunteer.

If you don’t volunteer already, what are you waiting for? Whatever your skills, there’s an organization that can put them to good use. Opportunities range from regular commitments to occasional help. Be sure to choose something that interests you. And remember: You may get as much out of volunteering as the people you help.
Step outside to shake up your exercise routine

The great outdoors can be a powerful tool to help lift your mood, shed excess weight, and change up your exercise goals. The benefits of exercise can also lead to improved mental health and decreased risk of falling. Here are six perks to getting sweaty outside this summer:

1. **Increase your motivation.** Research suggests that exercise may feel easier when done in nature. If you’re moving at your own speed (rather than that of a studio instructor’s, for example), you may find yourself walking faster outdoors than you would at an indoor gym without feeling like you’re working harder.

2. **Burn more calories.** When running or cycling outdoors, you may experience wind, which can offer natural resistance. This can help you burn more calories, since you have to work harder to overcome the resistance.

3. **Boost your mood.** Studies that have compared indoor with outdoor exercise suggest that outdoor activity can help you recharge and feel more refreshed. Plus, any type of outdoor activity can almost immediately improve self-esteem and negative moods, such as tension, anger, and depression.

4. **Detox your body.** With any good sweat in the summer heat, the body cleanses itself of toxic elements stored in your muscle tissues, primarily through perspiration. Just be sure you rehydrate properly afterward.

5. **Save money.** Exercising outdoors is an easy choice if you’re looking to save a few dollars this summer.

6. **Soak up the sun.** Breaking a sweat outdoors provides you with an opportunity that the indoor gym cannot: exposure to sunlight for vitamin D.

Just remember to know your limits, drink lots of water, and talk with your doctor before starting any new exercise routine.

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5 ways to stay active in retirement

Once you’ve left the working world, you still need to stay active to keep healthy. Here are a few post-retirement ideas that can help you stay vital:

1. Exercise daily.
2. Volunteer.
3. Work part time.
4. Learn something new, whether it’s a new language or how to bowl.
5. Stay accountable—network with friends who share your interests and keep each other motivated.
Your wellness.  
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*Medicare has neither reviewed nor endorsed this information.

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