January is a great month to set goals for healthy living. Many people, their goals involve being healthier—eating healthier foods, getting more exercise or losing weight. One part of being healthier is to not only reverse health problems but to stop or illness diseases before they happen, which is referred to as preventive health care.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) describes preventive health care as “action taken to prevent illness, and to prevent injuries to detect illness at an early stage when treatment is easier and less costly.” Researchers have determined which preventive services are most helpful for people’s age and health status. There are many different tests and services that people can have to monitor their health. Health care professionals will make suggestions based on their age and personal and family health history. Many times these are referred to as preventive health services include:

- Appropriate vaccinations according to age. The CDC reports that 46,000 lives are saved when children receive their recommended vaccinations. The CDC also indicates that about 46 percent of adolescents and 67 percent of adults report receiving a pneumococcal vaccine recom- mendations for all age groups.
- Cancer screenings—Breast, cervical, prostate and colon cancer screening tests are important for adults.
- Health tests—It’s also important for you to know your blood pressure, cholesterol level and other health information. These tests help your doctor decide if other health problems are present.
- Healthy lifestyle coaching (https://www.cdc.gov/prevention/).

Preventive health services can help reduce risk for chronic diseases—such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. These are important diseases to talk about because according to the CDC these diseases account for seven out of the 10 leading deaths among Americans every year. Costs associated with these health issues account for about 70 percent of our nation’s health spending. When people “know their numbers” they have a good relationship with their health care providers, and are able to get tests, vaccines and treatment regularily. It can improve their overall health.

Our health care is a system. No matter our age, pay attention to building and safeguarding our health. Catrina, I agree that a good, honest relationship with your health care provider can make a difference.

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