Prevention, early detection key components to staying healthy

By Military Health System Public Affairs

Tired of your wife nagging you to go to the doctor? Nervous because you haven't seen a doctor in years? Unsure of what health issues you should be concerned with? If you only go to your primary care provider when you have a cold, you may not be doing enough to ensure your healthy future.

"Prevention and early detection are key components to staying healthy," said Cmdr. James Ellzy, U.S. Navy family physician. "The list of screenings below can be a starting point for conversations with your primary care provider, because your health is a partnership between you and your health care team."

According to the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the three leading causes of death in males in the U.S. in 2004 were heart disease (27.2 percent), cancer (24.3 percent) and unintentional injuries (6.1 percent). All three of these percentages could be lowered by staying involved in prevention and safety.

Heart Disease. Simple screenings can help you detect early risk factors for heart disease such as high blood pressure or high cholesterol. Blood pressure screenings are painless and external—your doctor uses a cuff around your upper arm that inflates and deflates to increase and lower pressure in your blood. After getting an initial blood pressure screening, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)—one of the sources the military relies on for information about screenings—recommends you and your primary care provider use the results to determine how often to continue monitoring.

High Cholesterol is also a risk factor for heart disease and readings require only a blood test. The United States Preventative Services Task Force (USPSTF)—another source the military relies on for medical recommendations—determined in June 2008 that men between the ages of 20 and 35 should be screened if they are at increased risk for coronary heart disease. They also recommend that all men over the age of 35 receive regular screenings.

Cancer. Both the AHRQ and USPSTF recommend routine screenings for colon and rectal cancer for all men aged 50 to 75. Routine screenings are not recommended for those over 75 and men over 85 should no longer receive screenings. Colon and rectal cancer screenings—which can take many forms—are more involved, but they are routine and necessary. Talk to your doctor about the frequency and type of screening that is right for you.

In 2008 there were some changes in the recommendations for prostate cancer screenings. The USPSTF no longer recommends routine screening for everyone. It is extremely important to talk with your doctor about your health risks and the potential benefits of routine prostate cancer screening. Early detection has a dramatic impact on survival rate for cancer.

Unintentional Injuries. Don't forget to practice safety in every aspect of your life. Remember to wear a helmet when you are riding a bike or motorcycle, never drive without your seatbelt fastened, and slather on the sunscreen when spending the day outside running, boating, gardening or playing with the kids.

In addition to the screenings mentioned, Ellzy also recommends getting routine screenings for diabetes, vision, weight and depression. The details of each of these screenings can be found in the chart above.

You should always consult with your primary care provider to identify the appropriate health screenings for you. Keep in mind that the timeline presented here serves as a guideline, and does not mean that you should only get screened every five years. Based on family histories, predispositions and increased risk, you and your primary care provider should work together to determine a monitoring plan tailored specifically to you.

Recommended health screenings for men

AGE	19	22	25	30	35	40	45	50+
BLOOD PRESSURE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
WEIGHT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
DEPRESSION	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
CHOLESTEROL		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
EYE HEALTH						✓	✓	✓
DIEBETES							✓	✓
PROSTATE CANCER								✓
COLON & RECTAL CANCER								✓

Always talk with your doctor to determine when is the best time to begin these screenings. The timeline prescribed here serves as a guidline. But based on family histories, predispositions and increased risk, you and your doctor should work together to determine when is the best time to begin monitoring for these conditions.

Vacationing stateside or overseas, TRICARE is there with you

By Lora Sanders-VanNoy,
TRICARE Pacific Marketing Representative

As summer break moves into full swing don't forget that your medical benefits follow you wherever you go. If you'll be visiting family or friends in the states, or vacationing overseas, take your break with TRICARE, it will be right there with you.

When away from your duty station, members are encouraged to use Military Treatment Facilities (MTF) when care is required if able. In the event of an emergency (a threat to life, limb, or eyesight) go directly to the nearest emergency room, military or civilian. In urgent cases, use of the nearest MTF is preferred or the nearest TRICARE network provider. By using a network provider you will minimize out of pocket expenses and paperwork to file. Routine care should be taken care of before leaving the area or waiting until you return to receive care from your Primary Care Manager. Routine care includes management of chronic health conditions, routine physicals, and requests for prescription refills.

When on the road, you can have prescriptions filled at any MTF pharmacy, a TRICARE network retail pharmacy, using the TRICARE Mail Order Pharmacy (TMOP) or at a non-network retail pharmacy. An MTF can fill your prescription free of charge provided one is available and they stock the medication you require. The network pharmacy (TRRx) includes more than 53,000 retail pharmacies in the US, Puerto Rico, Guam and the US Virgin Islands. To fill prescriptions using TMOP, administered by Express Scripts (www.express-scripts.com/TRICARE), you need to provide your temporary address so that your order can be mailed to you at that location. Lastly, you can have your prescription filled at a non-network retail pharmacy, but this is the most costly option since you must pay for your medications at the time of purchase and then file a claim with TRICARE for reimbursement.

If vacationing overseas, active duty service members and their Prime-enrolled family members can utilize International SOS (ISOS) for medical assistance. ISOS is a worldwide medical assistance company that TRICARE has partnered with to provide medical assistance to eligible TRICARE beneficiaries. By simply calling ISOS collect or direct at IDD+65-6338-9277, arrangements can be made to ensure members receive quality care immediately. By calling ISOS, active duty service members and their Prime-enrolled family members will enjoy the convenience of the cashless and claimless feature of this service. Active duty service members can use this feature for urgent/emergent medical/dental needs and Prime-enrolled active duty family members can use this feature for emergent medical needs. Cashless and claimless means no out-of-pocket upfront costs or claims paperwork to file.

Finally, enjoy your break, TRICARE has you covered. Stop by the TRICARE Service Center to pick up your TRICARE Pacific Travel Card or call the TRICARE Pacific Marketing representative at 243-9528 for more information.