

vitality

Kaiser Permanente's Healthy Aging Newsletter



**FEATURED IN
THIS ISSUE:**

**Leap over
exercise
hurdles**

**Get help for
depression**

**Prepping for
doctor visits**

**Let's talk
about leaks**

**Quiz on bone
strength**

9 ways to age well and prevent falls

By Eric B. Larson, MD, MPH

WHEN MY MOTHER was in her late 50s, she had a series of mishaps, beginning with a fall at an outdoor wedding in Montana. Her heel got caught in a gopher hole and down she went, fracturing her ankle. Over the next 5 years she suffered 5 more broken bones related to falls – fractures of her hip, wrist, elbow, and each kneecap.

My mother had osteoporosis, a fairly common condition of aging that weakens your bones and can lead to crippling injuries. Her doctor prescribed various drug treatments. Most caused bad side effects and had to be stopped.

But one recommendation made a big difference. Her doctor suggested that she start a daily habit of walking and leg-lifting exercises. She followed his advice and after that, the fractures stopped.

She wasn't "cured" of osteoporosis. In fact, her bones got thinner as she aged. But as exercise improved her strength and balance, she quit falling – so she quit breaking bones. She lived to be 97, and she spent most of her older years traveling, gardening, and enjoying her grandchildren and a good, active life.

A study recently published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)** found mountains of evidence that taking steps to prevent falls really works. So here are 9 fall-prevention tips to keep you steady on your feet and aging well.

1. Get physically active

Regular exercise – daily is best – such as walking, swimming, or bicycling can help you build muscle strength, improve balance, and reduce

*Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), Nov. 7, 2017

Health and wellness or prevention information

9 ways to age well and prevent falls

fatigue. Activities like yoga, Pilates, and tai chi can also help. Avoid long periods of sitting. Instead, get up often to walk and stretch. If illness or injury slows you down, make rehabilitation exercises a top priority. Exercising with light weights or bands can help maintain or build muscle strength, which tends to decline with age.

2. Get your vision checked

Eyesight often declines as you age, which puts you at risk for falling over things you don't see. That's why it's important to get regular eye exams, and keep prescription eyeglasses or contact lenses up to date. Exams can also check for certain eye diseases that can lead to serious vision problems if left untreated.

3. Make smart footwear choices

The safest shoes have laces or Velcro fasteners, good heel support, and non-slip soles. The highest

Get a shower chair if you're unsteady standing for long periods of time.

6. Avoid too much alcohol

Feeling "tipsy" is a sign that your balance and reactions aren't at their best and you're at greater risk of falling. Also, combining alcohol and prescription medications can make you unsteady.

7. Fall-proof your home

Get rid of loose electrical cords and throw rugs. Avoid slippery floors and icy surfaces. Make sure rooms and hallways are well lit. Use night lights.

8. Consider taking vitamin D

Ask your doctor about this supplement, which improves bone and muscle strength. It's especially important for people living in northern latitudes, like Washington state, where less sunlight reduces the body's ability to use vitamin D.

Regular exercise such as walking, swimming, or bicycling can help you build muscle strength, improve balance, and reduce fatigue.



risk for falls comes from walking around barefoot or in stocking feet – even indoors. So choose a good "tennis shoe," and avoid high heels. Keep a pair of nonslip slippers with good soles beside your bed to put on when you get up at night.

4. Check your medications, especially sleeping pills

Talk to your doctor if you feel dizzy or unusually tired. The problem might be linked to medications you're taking. Drugs for high blood pressure and chronic pain often cause balance problems and lead to falls. Antidepressant, anti-psychotic, anti-anxiety, and sleeping medications can also cause problems.

5. Get the right equipment

Use a cane or walker if you need it. Install and use handrails around your toilet and bathtub.

9. Talk to your health care team about your risk of falling

Research shows that getting advice based on your individual health and fitness needs is the best way to prevent falls. It's also a good time to talk to your provider about your medications, your vision, possible hazards in your home, and more.

I hope these simple, proven fall-prevention tips will help you and your loved ones stay safe and healthy for many years to come. ■

Eric B. Larson, MD, MPH is executive director of Kaiser Permanente Washington Health Research Institute. He is also a national leader in geriatric research, and author of the new book Enlightened Aging, with Joan DeClaire

CONVENIENT CARE

Getting care from the comfort of your home is even easier now



WHEN YOU HAVE A MEDICAL QUESTION or want to talk to someone about a health issue right away, you have more than one way to reach us. Our new service called Care Chat lets you get care online, in real time, from a real live Kaiser Permanente clinician. It's just one of the secure, private, and convenient ways you can get care without leaving home.

NEW! CARE CHAT

Care Chat is a great choice for questions about common health conditions that can be diagnosed and treated without a physical exam, such as a cough or diarrhea.

How it works

- Sign on at kp.org/wa between 8 a.m. and 10 p.m., 7 days a week.
- Click the chat link and type your question or a brief description of your health issue.
- After you've sent your message, a Kaiser Permanente clinician in your area will start typing back and you'll begin a virtual chat.
- You can get answers to medical questions, a diagnosis or treatment plan, and even a prescription if needed.*
- Care Chat is staffed by Kaiser Permanente clinicians.
- No appointment is needed and there's no out-of-pocket cost.
- Care Chat is also available through the latest version of the Kaiser Permanente Washington mobile app.

THE CONSULTING NURSE HELPLINE

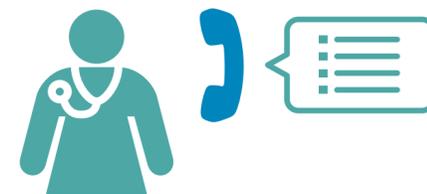
Our nurses are ready to help with just about any medical issue you'd like advice about. The only exception is life-threatening medical emergencies, when you should call 911 immediately.

How it works

- Nurses are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Call 1-800-297-6877 or 206-630-2244. Have your member ID number handy.
- A patient care representative will ask you what you want to discuss, then will transfer you to a Kaiser Permanente nurse.
- The nurse will ask you to explain your health issue, and will probably ask you additional questions. Together you'll decide what you should do next, ranging from caring for yourself at home to seeking immediate medical attention.
- Nurses are Kaiser Permanente clinicians.
- There's no out-of-pocket cost for this service.

These are just a couple of your care options at Kaiser Permanente. For information about your other care choices, go to kp.org/wa/getcare.

*Prescriptions from Care Chat must be filled at Kaiser Permanente medical offices or through our mail-order service.



Please check! Does Social Security have your current address?

Between July 2018 and April 2019, new Medicare cards – with new numbers – are being mailed to all Medicare beneficiaries by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). Please take a few moments to make sure the Social Security Administration has your correct mailing address so your card reaches you promptly. Call **1-800-772-1213** or go online to www.ssa.gov.

CMS will send us your new Medicare number and we'll update our records automatically. You'll continue to use the Kaiser Permanente member ID card and membership number you've always used when getting care with us.



Your new Medicare card will include a unique identification number instead of your Social Security number. This is to help protect you from identity theft.

Depressed? Your doctor can help

MANY PEOPLE FEEL DEPRESSED at one time or another, and everyone experiences the condition differently. Symptoms can affect your body, mind, and spirit, but you don't have to suffer alone. Help is as close as your doctor's office, say Kaiser Permanente's Tom Patamia, MD, and social worker Rebecca Parrish.

Who should I tell if I'm feeling depressed?

Parrish: Talking to your primary care doctor is a good first step. Your doctor knows you and your medical history and can check that other conditions aren't causing your symptoms. Another option is to call Behavioral Health Access Services

directly to set up an appointment to see a mental health specialist. Call 1-888-287-2680 or 206-901-6300.

What are the symptoms of depression?

Parrish: One of the most common symptoms of depression is losing interest in things that used to give you joy – like spending time with your grandkids, gardening, or going to a movie. Other symptoms can include feeling sad or irritable, having less energy than usual, or experiencing changes in appetite, weight, or sleeping patterns.

What's most important to remember about depression?

Dr. Patamia: Think of depression like other illnesses such as hypertension, diabetes, or heart disease. It's a condition that is very common and highly treatable. But it can also be very serious, and even result in suicide if it's ignored. The sooner you get help the better.

Does depression become more common as people get older?

Parrish: Older adults are at greater risk of depression because they tend to have at least one health condition, such as diabetes or heart disease. Depression is more common in people who have other illnesses. But depression is not a normal part of aging, and it's not something you just have to suffer with as you age.

How does my doctor check for signs of depression?

Parrish: At most of our medical offices, all adults are asked to fill out a questionnaire once a year that asks about emotional well-being and alcohol

and substance use. If your answers show that you may be depressed, we'll ask you more questions and find out if you'd like some help. All of our medical offices now have a social worker on staff, so you can often get help – including short-term counseling and medication – right in the clinic.

Do I have to take medication if I'm depressed?

Parrish: No. You and your care team will decide together what the most helpful treatment will be. If your depression is pretty mild, you might get better by just getting more physical activity or sleep, practicing some new coping skills, or trading negative self-talk for more positive thoughts. Another option is having a few counseling sessions with a social worker, right in your clinic. And sometimes medication, combined with the other options, works best.

Will depression go away without treatment?

Dr. Patamia: It can, but it may take a long time and cause you unnecessary suffering. Getting help is a much better option.

What should I do if I think I'm depressed?

Dr. Patamia: Talk to someone about your feelings. It can be a friend or a family member, your doctor, or a spiritual advisor. It doesn't have to be a mental health professional. Just putting your feelings in words and sharing them may be a first step toward feeling better.

What else do I need to know?

Dr. Patamia: Check with your doctor if an antidepressant medication seems to be causing side effects, or doesn't appear to be working. Your doctor may have you switch medications or take a different dose. But often it just takes a while before you'll notice the benefits of the medication. ■

Tom Patamia, MD, is a psychiatrist in Kaiser Permanente Behavioral Health Services.

Rebecca Parrish is an Integrated Behavioral Health clinical consultant and social work manager.

RESOURCES FOR HEALTHY AGING

Fitness classes

SilverSneakers® and Enhance®Fitness are exercise programs for our Medicare Advantage HMO members. Classes are held at participating fitness clubs and community centers across Washington state. For details, go to kp.org/wa/classes.

Living well workshops

Learn skills and get support for living your healthiest and happiest life with ongoing health conditions such as diabetes and heart disease. The workshops include six weekly sessions, each 2 ½ hours long. In-person, group sessions are offered at Kaiser Permanente medical centers throughout Western Washington. An online version of the workshop is also available. It's called Better Choices, Better Health. For more information about the workshops, go to kp.org/wa/livingwell.

Senior Caucus programs

Please join us for an upcoming Senior Caucus meeting. This group provides programs and resources designed to help you age well, and all Kaiser Permanente Medicare Advantage members are welcome to attend.

Meetings are held at the Capitol Hill Campus Main Building, 201 16th Ave E, Room D649, in Seattle, from 10 to 11:30 a.m. You can also call in to the meetings by dialing 1-877-224-4168, access code 536561#.

Friday, April 6: Join Chris Fordyce, MD, to learn about cognitive aging and aging gracefully.

Friday, May 4: Susan Mullaney, our regional president, will provide an update on Kaiser Permanente Washington and answer your questions.

Friday, June 1: Sleep disorders will be the topic of this program, with speaker Louis Holtzman, a pulmonary physician assistant.

DISCOVER THE MANY BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

Helping others can help you too

Have some extra time and want to make a difference? Studies show that volunteering is good for your body and mind. It can lower your blood pressure and ease depression. Volunteering can also increase your happiness and keep you actively engaged in life.

Not sure where you'd like to volunteer, or what you'd like to do? Here are a few volunteer opportunities offered through Kaiser Permanente.



TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE

If you like to drive and get out and about, helping Kaiser Permanente patients get to medical appointments may be the volunteer opportunity for you. Driving is a flexible way to volunteer. You use your own vehicle to transport members when, where, and how often it works for you. Rides are offered Monday through Friday, mileage is reimbursed, and supplemental liability insurance is provided. For more information, contact Lisa Hirohata, kpwa.resource-L@kp.org or 206-326-2815.



SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Kaiser Permanente Washington is the Official Health Partner of the 2018 Special Olympics USA Games in Seattle, July 1 through 6. Thousands of volunteers of every skill and experience level are needed to staff booths, provide support to athletes, and cheer in the stands. Events include track, swimming, gymnastics, basketball, and more. To learn more go to SpecialOlympicsUSAGames.org/kp-volunteers.



HOSPICE CARE

Our hospice volunteer team provides support to patients and families who are experiencing a terminal illness. Volunteers serve in a variety of ways, from reading aloud to patients to giving caregivers a needed break. Free training is provided. For more information, call James D'Amada (King/Snohomish counties) at 206-326-2338, or Julia Casey (Pierce/Kitsap counties) at 253-274-4635.

Finding ways around exercise obstacles

Your doctor has probably talked to you about the benefits of exercise – and there are lots of them. Exercise burns calories and tones muscles. It keeps our bones strong and boosts our mood. It decreases our chances of having high blood pressure, heart disease, and a number of other health conditions. And it even decreases the risk of getting dementia. It's well worth the effort.

But sticking to a regular exercise schedule isn't easy, and sometimes good intentions aren't enough to get us off the couch or out of bed. The trick is to be aware of some common obstacles and find ways around them. Here are some examples to help you get started.

CHALLENGE: Exercise is boring.

- **Choose activities you enjoy.** Walking, jogging, swimming, and dancing work major muscles and get your heart rate up.
- **Make it fun.** Toss a Frisbee, shoot hoops, play tag or kickball or soccer, ride bikes, or jump rope.
- **Mix it up.** Walk one day, cycle the next. Get moving with your favorite exercise video, or take a yoga or rumba class. If you aren't enjoying it, try something else.



- **Buddy up.** Exercising with a friend or family member makes it more likely you'll stick with your plans. You can encourage and support each other, and chatting makes the time fly by faster.

CHALLENGE: I'm afraid I'll hurt myself.

- **Talk to your doctor.** If you have a medical condition you're worried about or you've been injured in the past, your health care provider can help you choose exercises that are safe for you.
- **Start slowly.** If you haven't been exercising much, start with something as simple as a daily walk. Gradually increase the time and speed you walk. As your body gets stronger, add other activities.
- **If you feel sore, take a day off.** Give your muscles a chance to recover, then get right back to your schedule the next day.

CHALLENGE: I don't have time.

- **Divide it up.** Three 10-minute walks are just as good as one 30-minute walk.
- **Multi-task.** Exercise on a treadmill or stationary bike while you listen to music or watch TV. And remember that chores like vacuuming, raking the yard, or scrubbing the kitchen floor count as exercise too.
- **Make some trades.** Take a half hour walk instead of watching a half hour of TV.



- **Fit exercise into your normal day.** Take the long way through the mall when you go there to shop. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Walk to a nearby store instead of driving.
- **Reserve time on your calendar to exercise.** Treat it like an important appointment. Make it a commitment you don't break.
- **Be prepared.** Keep comfortable clothes and shoes with you so it's easy to fit in some exercise when you have a little time.

CHALLENGE: I'm too tired.

- **Time it right.** If you're a morning person, exercise first thing. If you tend to have more energy at night, get moving then.
- **Set realistic goals.** Start with short, 5-minute exercise sessions and slowly add more time.
- **Exercise at home.** Sometimes it's easier if you don't have to leave the house. Get moving with an exercise video, climb up and down stairs, or invest in a stationary bike or treadmill.
- **Just do it.** Getting some exercise will actually help boost your energy and help you feel better. ■



Make a list, check it twice

Preparing for doctor visits pays off

Make a shopping list before going to the grocery store and you're likely to buy everything you need. Go to the store without a list and what happens? Chances are you get home and say "Oops! I just remembered what I forgot!"

The same holds true for doctor appointments. A little planning – and yes, making a list – before your visit can help you explain your health issues, get your questions answered, and get the medical care you need.

Here's a worksheet that will help you get ready. Fill it out and take it with you to your appointment. You might also want to take a family member or friend with you. It helps to have someone along who can help you ask questions, and remember the answers.

What are the 3 most important issues I want to talk to my doctor about?

Symptoms	How long have you had symptoms?	When are your symptoms better or worse?	Comments

Besides seeing my doctor, what else am I doing for my health?

List all prescription medications and include dosages and how often you take the medications. Also list over-the-counter medicines, vitamins and supplements, energy drinks, diets, exercise, and alternative care – like acupuncture or massage.

What else do I want to discuss if there's time?

- _____
- _____
- _____

← Tear this page out and take it to your doctor visit.

Help us prepare for your visit

When you make an appointment for your office visit, tell the scheduler:

- **What your health concern is** so enough time is reserved for your visit.
- **If you need any assistive devices** to help you communicate during your visit. Devices we can provide at Kaiser Permanente facilities include reading and magnifying glasses, PocketTalkers to help amplify sound, a white board you can write on, and more.
- **If you need interpreter services.** Interpreters are available in person, and by phone and video. We do not allow friends or family members to be used as interpreters.

Wellness recommendations for men and women

Keeping you as healthy as possible as you age is at the heart of Kaiser Permanente's preventive care recommendations. This chart shows our care guidelines for most 65+ men and women. The specific care you need may be different based on your personal health history and risk factors. Talk to your health care team to find out exactly what care is right for you.

	Ages 65 to 75	76 and up
Both men and women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wellness visit every year.¹ Blood pressure check every year.² Cholesterol check every 5 years. Vision and hearing check every year. Pneumonia vaccine: 2 different vaccines given a year apart, one time for 65+. Tetanus-diphtheria vaccine every 10 years.³ Flu vaccine every year. Shingles vaccine: 2-dose series for ages 50+. Colon cancer screening: talk with your doctor about the method that's best for you. Hepatitis C test once if born between 1945 and 1965. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wellness visit every year.¹ Blood pressure check every year.² Cholesterol check every 5 years up to 79. Vision and hearing check every year. Pneumonia vaccine: 2 different vaccines given a year apart, one time for 65+. Tetanus-diphtheria vaccine every 10 years.³ Flu vaccine every year. Shingles vaccine: 2-dose series for ages 50+. Colon cancer screening: discuss optional screening with your doctor.
Women only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mammogram every 1 to 2 years based on your risk for breast cancer. Bone density (DEXA) test: one-time test after turning 65. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mammogram: discuss optional screening with your doctor. Bone density (DEXA) test: one-time test after turning 65.
Men only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) screening: one time for men 65 to 75 who have either a family history (parent, brother, or sister) of AAA OR personal risk factors (including cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity) OR smoked 100 cigarettes or more in their lifetime. 	<p>For both men and women, ask your doctor for advice about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lowering your risk for bone breaks and fractures. Handling the emotions that come with aging, and about improving your physical health and mental outlook. Fall prevention and bladder control.

¹A wellness visit may be an annual wellness visit, an annual physical exam, or both, depending on your plan's benefits.

²Keep your blood pressure below 140/90. If you're 80 or older, stay below 150/90. Patients with chronic kidney disease may

have a lower goal if recommended by their provider.

³Once in a lifetime, everyone 11 years of age and older should get a tetanus-diphtheria (Td) booster that contains pertussis (Tdap).

Managing your health care is easy online



Once you register for our personal online services, a variety of services and tools are readily available to you:

- Choose a doctor
- Schedule appointments*
- Refill most prescriptions
- Email your doctor's office*, the Consulting Nurse, or Member Services
- See your lab results and after-visit summaries*
- View and pay medical bills*
- Complete your Health Profile

To get started, go to kp.org/wa/signup.

*Available if you get care at a Kaiser Permanente location in Seattle, other Puget Sound cities, or Spokane.

Know how to keep your bones healthy?

MANY PEOPLE ARE CONFUSED about who's at risk of getting osteoporosis (thin, easily breakable bones) and how to prevent it, says Andrea Grace, MD. Are you one of them?



TAKE THIS QUIZ AND FIND OUT

- Only thin, frail older women get osteoporosis.
TRUE FALSE
- Both men and women start losing bone mass after age 30.
TRUE FALSE
- Walking is one of the best exercises to prevent osteoporosis.
TRUE FALSE
- I need to take a calcium supplement to protect my bones.
TRUE FALSE
- I can get all the vitamin D I need by getting out in the sunshine.
TRUE FALSE
- A bone density scan is like an X-ray that shows the strength of your bones.
TRUE FALSE
- You only need one bone density scan in your lifetime.
TRUE FALSE
- If I take osteoporosis medication I don't need to worry about fractures.
TRUE FALSE

ANSWERS

1. FALSE "Osteoporosis is a condition anyone can get, so we all need to pay attention to keeping our bones strong," says Dr. Grace. You're at higher risk of osteoporosis if you smoke or don't exercise regularly, or if you weigh less than 130 pounds. Risk also increases if you have a parent who has had a hip fracture, or if you're a woman who has gone through menopause.

2. TRUE Thinning bones is part of aging. It starts early and happens slowly over the years. You have osteoporosis if your bones get so thin that they become weak and break easily.

3. TRUE Other weight-bearing exercises that are helpful include climbing stairs, jogging, playing tennis, dancing, and weight training.

4. FALSE "It's best to get calcium from the foods you eat – including dark green vegetables like broccoli and spinach, shrimp and salmon, oranges and almonds, yogurt and cheese," says Dr. Grace. "If you're eating a healthy diet you're probably getting plenty of calcium. But if you're worried that you're not, talk to your doctor."

5. FALSE Exposing your bare skin to sunlight is the most natural way to get vitamin D. But we don't get enough sunlight in the Northwest to make that effective, says Dr. Grace. "Getting enough vitamin D from foods is also hard to do, so taking a supplement is usually the best approach." (Foods that contain vitamin D include fish, beef liver, cheese, and eggs.)

6. TRUE The scan is usually recommended for women over 65, and men and women of any age who have fractured a bone. You may also need a bone density scan if you're at higher risk for fractures, you've lost some height, or you have a hunched posture or unexplained back pain.

7. FALSE Some people only need one scan. But if the first scan shows you have osteoporosis, you may need another scan in 2 to 5 years.

8. FALSE Medication makes fractures less likely, but it's still important to exercise, eat a healthy diet, and prevent falls. ■

Andrea Grace, MD, is a Kaiser Permanente physician in Geriatrics and Palliative Care.

Know your choices, share your wishes

IT'S NOT PLEASANT TO THINK ABOUT, but what if a sudden illness or accident leaves you unable to make health care decisions for yourself? If you've completed your advance directives – documents that explain your wishes in case you can't speak for yourself – you'll have some control over your life, no matter what happens.

What do I need to do?

Step 1: Think about what you want.

Consider who you'd like to make medical decisions for you if you can't speak for yourself. Do you want to be resuscitated if you aren't breathing? And do you want medical treatment to keep you alive – such as being on a breathing machine or getting food or water through a tube?

Step 2: Talk to your family.

Your friends or family may say, "No! We don't want to talk about this," but having a conversation with them is important. If you have a serious medical crisis, having them know what you want will make things easier for them.

Step 3: Complete your advance directives.

Advance directives that relate to your medical care include:

- **Durable power of attorney for health care.** It names the person or persons you want to make health care decisions for you if you aren't able to make them for yourself.

- **Living will.** It tells your power of attorney and medical team what kind of treatment you want or don't want to keep you alive.
- **POLST** (physician orders for life-sustaining treatment). This explains your wishes for several things, including resuscitation, in clear medical terms for doctors and 911 responders. The POLST form is a written medical order that's completed by you and your doctor. It's mainly for people who have a life-limiting illness or are at an advanced age. This is the form people post on their refrigerator.

Step 4: File your documents where they can be easily found.

Your advance directives should be copied and shared with your doctor, lawyer, caregiver, and family or friends. Keep your copies in a safe place and review them from time to time to see if you need to make any updates. Your durable power of attorney should have copies, and your family should know where to find copies. Your advance directives can be stored in our medical record system for easy access by your medical team if needed.

You can get a free copy of our advance directives booklet at any Kaiser Permanente medical office or by calling our Resource Line at 1-800-992-2279 or 206-326-2800. ■

Advance directives workshop helps you prepare

Your Life, Your Choices is a free, 2-hour group workshop offered by Kaiser Permanente that helps you complete your advance directives.

Classes are offered in the spring and fall at most Kaiser Permanente medical offices throughout Western Washington and at the Riverfront Medical Center in Spokane. There's no charge for you and a guest. To find out about classes and sign up for one, go to kp.org/wa/advancedirectives.

For more information about advance directives go to kp.org/wa/advancedirectives

The common problem nobody wants to talk about

Ready for an amazing statistic about urinary incontinence? It's estimated that as many as 1 in 3 women and men in the United States have problems with leaking urine. No one knows the exact number because many people don't tell anyone about their symptoms. But it's time to start talking about it – at least to your doctor. The condition can be controlled or even eliminated, and there's no need to suffer in silence.

What should you do?

1. Talk to your doctor.

- Whether you're leaking a little or a lot, it's good to get it checked out.
- Your doctor may want to do a few tests. This is to make sure that another health condition isn't causing the leakage.

2. Try some prevention.

- Drop some pounds if you're overweight. Extra weight can put pressure on your bladder and the muscles around it.
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, carbonated drinks, and sour or tart foods. They can irritate your bladder.
- Eat more fiber to prevent constipation, which can cause urinary incontinence.

Got the urge? Try "freeze and squeeze"

Kegel exercises (see below) help you strengthen your pelvic floor muscles. When you get the urge "to go," try using those strengthened muscles:

- Stop and hold still. Sit down if you can.
- Squeeze your pelvic floor muscles quickly 3 to 5 times. Repeat if needed.
- Relax the rest of your body and take a deep breath.
- Concentrate on controlling the urge to urinate, then distract yourself so you're thinking about something else.
- Wait until the urge subsides, then walk – don't run – to a bathroom to empty your bladder.

- Don't smoke. It can cause chronic coughing, which damages the muscles that control the flow of urine.
- Limit the amount of liquids you drink before bedtime.

3. Practice Kegel exercises.

- Imagine that you're trying to stop the flow of urine.
- Tighten the muscles you use to stop urinating and keep them tight for a few seconds. Relax for a few seconds. Repeat.
- Work up to tightening the muscles for 10 seconds, and repeating 10 times. Do this 3 times a day.

4. Talk to your doctor again.

- Discuss whether your leakage has improved with self-care.
- If it hasn't, you and your doctor can consider other options.

What's the difference between annual wellness visits and annual physical exams?

Beginning in January 2018, our Kaiser Permanente Medicare Advantage HMO plans offer both an annual physical exam and an annual wellness visit – with no copays.* Here's the care you'll receive at each appointment – and how you can tell the two visits apart.

Worried about a specific health issue?

Please schedule a separate visit with your provider to discuss it. When you make the appointment, explain what you want to talk to your provider about so the scheduler can reserve enough time for your visit.

Annual wellness visit

In-person visit with no copay

A NURSE will:

- ✓ Review your medical and family history
- ✓ Check your vital signs (including blood pressure and pulse)
- ✓ Review preventive tests/shots and schedule any needed updates
- ✓ Review your Health Profile
- ✓ Go over the list of your current care providers
- ✓ Check your ability to perform daily tasks easily and safely
- ✓ Talk about any concerns you may have about your mental abilities
- ✓ Discuss your preventive screening schedule and risk factors or conditions that need further attention, and provide educational resources if appropriate

Annual physical exam

In-person visit with no copay

A PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER will:

- ✓ Review your medical and family history
- ✓ Check your vital signs (including blood pressure and pulse)
- ✓ Review preventive tests/shots and order any needed updates
- ✓ Review your Health Profile
- ✓ Provide a physical exam
- ✓ Update your care plans for any ongoing conditions

This new benefit is not offered on Basic and Harbor plans.

*If new issues are brought up during the visit, you'll be responsible for a copay.



Planning a trip?

Plan for your health care needs too

BEFORE LEAVING TOWN, it's a good idea to think through what your health care needs will be while you're away. Here's a checklist to help you get ready for a healthy and safe trip. And one last reminder: don't forget to pack your Kaiser Permanente member ID card.

MEDICATIONS

- Refill your prescriptions before you leave. You can ask your doctor for up to a 90-day supply if you need it.
- Bring a list of all your medications in case you lose them or need medical attention.
- Pack all your important medicines in a carry-on bag and keep them with you.
- If you have diabetes, check with your airline about travel restrictions related to insulin, insulin syringes, and blood-glucose testing supplies.

EXERCISE

- Take stretching or walking breaks, especially if you're spending a lot of time sitting in cars, trains, or planes. Sitting for too long can cause dangerous blood clots to form in your veins.
- Plan to do some of your sightseeing on foot.
- If you're staying in a hotel that has a swimming pool or fitness center, set aside some time to fit in some exercise.

SAFETY

- Walk carefully and watch where you're going to avoid falls and injuries. Make sure your hotel room has plenty of light, and that walkways are clear so you won't trip.
- Wear clothes that cover your skin and protect against mosquito bites and sun damage. Use insect repellent and sunscreen with a sun protection factor of at least 30.

GETTING CARE

- Remember that you're covered for emergency and urgent care no matter where you are in the world.
- If you have a medical emergency while traveling, call 911 or the local emergency assistance number right away. Then call our Hospital Notification Line at 1-888-457-9516 within 24 hours – or as soon as possible – so we can follow up on your care.
- If you're a Medicare Advantage HMO member and need care while traveling outside the Kaiser Permanente Washington region, please call our Member Services at 1-888-901-4600 (TTY 711), 8 a.m. - 8 p.m., 7 days a week. Or call our Consulting Nurse helpline at 1-800-297-6877. The phone numbers are also listed on the back of your member ID card.
- Manage your health care while you're away by signing on at kp.org/wa. Refill prescriptions, check your benefits, and more.

For more information about care while you're traveling, visit kp.org/wa/travel. ■

Traveling outside the United States?

Our Travel Advisory Service can give you health advice based on where you're going, what you're doing, and your medical history. It's best to set up an appointment to talk with a travel nurse **at least 4 to 6 weeks before you're leaving on your trip**. This service, and the vaccinations and medications you need specifically for travel, are not covered benefits.