



Take
Care
of
Yourself

TEACHING TIPS: MEDICAL CHECK-UPS

Prevention of health problems is the main idea of this series of leaflets. Encouraging people to get enough sleep and exercise and to stop the spread of disease is a big job. For some families this will mean changing old habits and ways of living. Do not expect that your efforts will always succeed quickly.

Getting people to go to their doctor for medical check-ups may be difficult. Changing people's habits takes time, patience and good teaching. Some people must overcome fears of seeing a doctor. Also, the question of cost is very important to many families.

Getting people to have medical check-ups will depend partly on how well you show people that they can be helped by a check-up. All people value their health and want to lead happy, productive lives. Take advantage of this as you encourage them to get health check-ups.

Some people will ask, "Why should I see my doctor for a check-up when I feel fine?" This is a reasonable question, and you should be ready to answer it. Many health problems can be discovered in a check-up, even before the person notices any signs of the problem.

A good example of this is uterine (you'-tur-in) cancer. The uterus (womb) is a female organ. Not long ago, more women died from uterine cancer than from any other type of cancer. Now, a very simple test called the Pap smear can find cancer of the uterus before a woman shows any signs of the disease. Then, it can be treated early and chances of recovery are much greater. Women older than 20 should have a Pap smear every year; those 40 or older need to have one every 6 months. Younger women who are sexually active need to be tested regularly, too.

Another example of the value of health check-ups has to do with high blood pressure.

This condition may not cause any noticeable symptoms. However, if it is not found and treated by a doctor, it can lead to hardening of the arteries, heart disease and other serious conditions that can shorten a person's life. This is another good reason why health examinations are so important.

Plan what you will say if the question of cost comes up as you talk about health check-ups. It is true that medical exams cost money. But, if a check-up turns up a health disorder early, it can save money. More important, learning about health problems before they become serious can save lives. Usually, it is easier, cheaper and more successful if medical treatment is started before problems become serious. Illnesses not found and treated before a person becomes very ill often require:

- Many doctor visits
- Hospital care
- Expensive drugs

These may cost much more money than the cost of a health examination. Emphasize that medical check-ups, along with the other keys to health, do more than save dollars. All of these practices, followed regularly, help us enjoy ourselves and other people and lead happy, effective lives. This is what good health is all about . . . it is priceless, do not lose it.

This information was adapted by Carla Shearer, Extension health education specialist, The Texas A&M University System, from materials prepared by the Illinois Cooperative Extension Service. The author appreciates the assistance of Zelda Williams, Lynne Thibodeaux and Elaine Ward, Extension program specialists—family resource development program, Prairie View A&M University, The Texas A&M University System, in the preparation of this publication.

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