Plan for a Healthy Getaway

When planning the perfect getaway, a little preparation can go a long way in helping you stay healthy when away from home.

You might spend hours researching the best hotels and the cheapest flights, but don’t forget to do a little legwork to put together a plan to keep you healthy as you travel. If you have a chronic illness such as asthma or another respiratory illness, you may have issues when traveling on public transportation or staying in a hotel. A change in the environment can increase your exposure to changing weather conditions or allergens and irritants.

Make an appointment with your doctor several weeks before your trip, and ask your doctor about adjusting your medication or to provide extra prescriptions in case you need refills. And while you’re at your doctor’s office, make sure that all of your immunizations are up-to-date, including asking about a yearly flu shot.

Pack it up and stay healthy by putting together a travel health pack that includes:

- Any medicine your doctor tells you to take.
- Sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher.
- For travel to warmer climates, insect repellant to protect against mosquitoes that transmit serious viruses such as Zika and West Nile.
- First aid items with bandages, antiseptic wipes and antibiotic ointment packets.
- Sunglasses that block both UVA and UVB rays.

And don’t forget to take your coverage with you by packing your member ID card. For on the go, you can take a photo of both sides of your card using your phone, but you will have to show your member ID card if you need to seek health care services. If you are concerned about how to get medical care when on the road, call Customer Service before you go, so they can explain what to do and where to go. The Customer Service number is listed on the back of your member ID card.

Reducing Risk Makes the Heart Grow Stronger

Are you in a risky relationship with your heart? It may be tempting to believe that doing just one healthy thing will take care of your heart disease risk. For example, you may hope that if you exercise regularly, you can still eat a lot of fatty foods and stay fairly healthy. Not true. To protect your heart, make the changes that address each and every risk factor you have, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, being overweight, smoking or high cholesterol.

Make an appointment with your doctor for a thorough checkup and work together to help achieve your heart healthy goal. Remember to ask questions about your chances of developing heart disease and ways to lower your risk.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Become a Smart Health Care Consumer

Having health insurance has many benefits. It protects you and your family from financial losses in the same way that home or car insurance does. Even if you are in good health, you never know when you might have an accident or get sick.

In addition to maintaining healthy habits, try these tips to help you save money:

• **Choose the right plan:** Choose a plan that covers the exams, care and tests you may use often. Even if it means a higher premium, it may save you money in the long run.
• **Know your plan:** Take the time to know what is and is not covered. To make sure your plan still meets your needs, give your plan an annual checkup. This is especially true if you’ve had a major life event like a birth, death, marriage or divorce.
• **Stay in your network:** Health plans use a group of doctors, hospitals and other health care professionals called provider networks. Choose doctors in your network to avoid paying higher out-of-network costs.
• **Understand how to save on prescriptions:** You may be able to save on drugs by going to network pharmacies or by using mail order services. Also, check to see if there’s a generic version of the drugs you take.

Encourage all family members to live a healthier lifestyle too. Log in to Blue Access for Members™ to get more health and wellness tips.

Don’t get Caught Without a Flu Shot

No one wants to face coming down with the flu. That’s why it’s important that everyone get an annual flu shot to help avoid the illness altogether.

Flu shots can be helpful for most people. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggests a yearly dose for those who:

• Are pregnant.
• Are 6 months of age and older.
• Have a chronic health condition, such as asthma, diabetes, or heart, kidney or lung disease.
• Have a weakened immune system.
• Live at a nursing home or other long-term care facility.
• Are child-care or health care workers.
• Live with or care for someone at high risk of flu complications, like a child with asthma.

Ask your doctor about a flu shot and get up-to-date information on immunizations and treatment.

Put Serving Sizes Back In Check

There are more restaurants than ever in the U.S., and the portion sizes they serve have grown over the past 20 years. Research shows a link between weight gain and larger-sized portions. People who eat at fast-food restaurants often eat larger meals. Cut down serving sizes by keeping these hints in mind:

• Order regular, not super-size meals when eating out.
• Take half your meal home from restaurants.
• Round out your meal by ordering healthy side dishes, such as a side salad with low-fat dressing or fruit.
• Eat one serving and not the whole box or package.
• Making serving sizes smaller can add up to healthier meals. Enjoy your food, but eat less and avoid oversized portions.

Source: Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Source: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services