

# “I go to my doctor when I am sick or need medication. Do I need to have an annual visit?”

An annual physical exam with your Primary Care Provider (PCP) is a great opportunity to focus on prevention and screenings. A regular health exam can help detect problems before they start or are in early stages, when chances for successful treatment and cure are better.

## Get prepared for your appointment

- If you have access to a health assessment, such as Fallon’s Healthy Health Plan, complete it before your PCP visit. The results may provide information you can share with your PCP and help prepare questions for your visit.
- Be honest about lifestyle habits and changes you have noticed with your body. Self-exams are important to help you learn what feels and looks normal so you can recognize when something is different. The more your PCP knows about you, the easier it is to develop a plan to prevent, treat or manage health conditions.
- Write down a list of health concerns and questions. Before your appointment, rank the items in order of importance. You don’t want to spend too much time with issues that aren’t as significant and then run out of time.
- If you have requests that require paperwork—for example, you are going on disability or in need of a handicapped placard—be sure to gather all the appropriate documents and let your provider know early in the visit.
- Bring a list of your medications, including prescription, over-the-counter, herbal remedies and vitamins.

## At your appointment your PCP will:

- Check your height, weight, blood pressure and other routine measurements.
- Review your health assessment and discuss your health history, family health history, physical and mental health risks and daily habits.
- Discuss which screening tests are right for you. For example, you can discuss your options for breast cancer, prostate cancer or colon cancer screening.
- Complete a routine physical exam. This may include skin, lung, neurological and heart exams.
- Discuss what laboratory tests, including blood tests, may be necessary based on your health history.
- Discuss how to prevent certain health problems and how to take the best possible care of yourself. Your PCP may make suggestions for additional or follow-up care based on your age and risk factors. (For example, vaccines to prevent the flu, shingles or pneumonia, or resources to address diabetes care, weight loss or quitting tobacco.)

An annual visit with your PCP is important to maintain good health and is most often covered by your insurance provider. Check with your insurance provider’s customer service department for questions about your coverage. And check with your PCP to see if it’s time to schedule your annual visit!

