

It's always time to make a HEDIS "wellness check" appointment
By John Brooks
Special to Guidon

FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo. (Dec. 27, 2012) - The Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set is a tool used by more than 90 percent of America's healthcare plans to measure performance on important dimensions of care and service, according to the National Committee for Quality Assurance.

"HEDIS is a tool used to reduce the need for future reactive care," said Cindy Huff, General Leonard Wood Army Community Hospital HEDIS nurse.

"An ounce of prevention is still better than a pound of cure," added Huff. "Benjamin Franklin's famous quote is as true today as it was long ago."

HEDIS "wellness checks" exist to keep us firmly on the preventative care end of the healthcare spectrum.

"Instead of just treating you when you're sick, we want to help keep you well," said Huff.

"Altogether, HEDIS consists of 80 measures across 8 domains of care, and five wellness screenings that focus specifically on preventative care," Huff said.

Five preventative care wellness screenings:

X-rays and mammograms

The American Cancer Society recommends that women between the ages of 40 and 69 have mammograms every two years, or more often, as directed by a healthcare provider.

Patients often say that breast cancer does not run in my family, however, the American Cancer Society reports that only about 5% to 10% of all cancers are inherited.

It only takes about a half hour to have a mammogram. Mammogram appointments can be made by calling the General Leonard Wood Army Community Hospital Radiology Department directly at 573.596.0029.

Blood tests for diabetics

If you have diabetes, you should have your A1c (a blood test that shows your doctor how well your diabetes is under control) and cholesterol checked at least once per year, or more often, as directed by your doctor. The better you keep diabetes and cholesterol in control, the lower your risks for complications associated with diabetes will be.

PAP smear (Cervical Cancer Screening)

Women, starting at the age of 21, or even earlier, should have a PAP smear every three years, or more often if recommended by their healthcare provider. According to the National Institute of Cancer, it is

estimated the 12,170 women will be diagnosed with Cervical Cancer, and 4,220 women will die from cancer of the cervix in 2012.

The earlier cancer or abnormalities are detected, the better the odds will be for a good outcome.

Colon Cancer Screening (Colonoscopy, Sigmoidoscopy or Fecal Occult Blood samples)

The American Cancer society reports that colorectal cancer is the third most commonly diagnosed cancer, and the third leading cause of cancer death, in both men and women in the U.S.

Starting at age 50, men and women should have a colon cancer screening. A colon cancer screening can range from stool samples (fecal occult blood, looking for hidden blood in your stool) completed once a year, sigmoidoscopy every five years, or a colonoscopy every 10 years or earlier as directed by a healthcare provider.

Colon cancer screening is not nearly as uncomfortable as being diagnosed with cancer that could have been prevented or detected early. Colon cancer screening is not a wellness check that should be neglected.

Asthma

Asthma affects people of all ages, but it most often starts during childhood. In the United States, more than 25 million people are known to have asthma. About 7 million of these people are children. Asthma has no cure. Even when you feel fine, you still have the disease and it can flare up at any time.

It is important for those diagnosed with persistent asthma to take asthma medication daily, as directed by healthcare providers. Taking controller medication daily (even when you are feeling good) helps prevent asthma flare-ups. Always keep a rescue inhaler with you for flare-ups. Taking an active role in managing your asthma can help you lead a normal, active life.

There are many benefits from completing HEDIS wellness checks besides just enjoying better health.

Patients, along with their doctors, can benefit from more accurate diagnoses due to a decreased number of factors involved in the diagnosis process. Additional complications and increased costs can also be avoided when fewer combinations of medications are prescribed.

In addition, hospitals benefit from additional funding based on the number of patients who complete HEDIS wellness checks.

“HEDIS-based funding is above and beyond our normal budget and is used to buy new equipment and increase Staff, which in turn helps us take better care of you,” said Huff.

“Never leave that till tomorrow which you can do today,” said Franklin, proving that it’s always time to benefit from making a HEDIS wellness check appointment.

Call the General Leonard Wood Army Community Hospital to make an appointment for your wellness checks today at 866.299.4234. For more information about HEDIS, call 573-596-0559.

“Preventing health problems and effectively managing existing ones are two extremely important things to us,” Huff said. “We care about you and want you to be as healthy as you can be.”

(Editor’s note: John Brooks is the Marketing and Public Affairs Officer at the General Leonard Wood Army Community Hospital)