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Katy's Korner

A GIFT TO YOURSELF

As we enter this Holiday Season and start the beginning of a new year, what is the best gift you can give yourself? This year, more than ever would be a **physical** with your primary care provider. "Why?" you ask.

Well, with the economy the way it is and money being tight, many patients are staying away from the doctors' office during a time that would be most beneficial to their health care. During these stressful times many hidden health issues can arise or go undetected. There are many health concerns that can develop during stressful times. These symptoms can be stress related or even be caused by other health problems. Only your provider can decide which it would be. Here is a list of symptoms to be concerned about that may be stress related:

- Anxiety
- Back pain
- Constipation or diarrhea Depression Fatigue
- Headaches
- High blood pressure
- Insomnia
- Problems with relationships
- Shortness of breath
- Stiff neck
- Upset stomach
- Weight gain or loss

Can Stress Hurt Your Health?

Stress can cause health problems or make problems worse if YQU don't learn ways to deal with it. Talk to your family doctor if you think some of your symptoms are caused by stress. It's important to make sure that your symptoms aren't caused by other health problems.

What Causes stress?

Feelings of stress are caused by the body's instinct to defend itself. This instinct is good in emergencies, such as getting out of the way of a speeding car. But stress can cause physical symptoms if it goes on for too long, such as in response to life's daily challenges and changes.

When this happens, it's as though your body gets ready to jump out of the way of the car, but you're sitting still. Your body is working overtime, with no place to put all the extra energy

What Changes May Be Stressful?

Any sort of change can make you feel stressed, even good change. It's not just the change or event itself, but also how you react to it that matters. What's stressful is different for each person. For example, one person may feel stressed by retiring from work, while someone else may not.

Other things that may be stressful include being laid off from your job, child leaving or returning home, the death of your spouse, divorce or marriage, an illness, an injury, a job promotion, money problems, moving, or having a baby.

This is the time of year that people can utilize their health plans. Most all health insurance plans cover a once a year **Preventative or Wellness physical**. It is in the patient's best interest to utilize that visit to the fullest. You should always check your benefit package first or call the 800# on the back of your insurance card to find out what all is included in your yearly exam before making your appointment.

Three questions that you would want to ask are:

If your plan covers a preventative/wellness physical and does that include pap smear and mammogram coverage for females

What kind of lab work would be covered with your physical

If immunizations are covered under your plan

Once you know the answers to these 3 questions your provider will know exactly what he or she can include in your physical without costing you extra money. This information will allow them to give you the best possible physical within your insurance plan guidelines. If needed, they can also assist you with other programs that you may qualify for to help supplement *your* health care. One particular program through the County is a Well Women Program.

There are things that you can do to help maintain your health:

- Don't smoke or use tobacco
- Limit how much alcohol you drink
- Eat healthy
- Lose weight if you're overweight
- Exercise
- Control your cholesterol level
- Control high blood pressure
- Keep your shots up to date
- Check your breasts
- Get regular pap smears
- Don't sunbathe or use tanning booths
- Practice safe sex
- Ask your provider about other cancer screenings at your next physical

Give yourself the gift of Health! Happy Holidays