

Coaching higher-activated patients: Preventive care



Use this guide to coach higher-activated patients (PAM® Levels 3 and 4) on the importance of preventive care, from preparing for their appointments to making lifestyle choices that can help reduce health risks.

Build knowledge:

Assess the patient's current understanding of preventive care and its benefits.

- Ask the patient to **explain preventive care in their own words**. Make sure they understand that it includes annual wellness visits, cancer screenings, vaccinations, dental exams and vision exams, and that health insurance plans usually cover these.
- Have the patient **describe how preventive care benefits them personally**. Emphasize that it not only helps them avoid health problems, but that it also provides other long-term benefits such as lower healthcare costs and improved quality of life.
- Ask the patient to **explain which screening or preventive care service is most important to them right now**, and why. Which one is least important, and why? Why does the patient think one service is more important to their health than another?

Build skills:

Help the patient overcome any barriers to care and prepare for upcoming appointments.

- Work with the patient to create a list of recommended services and screenings relevant to them. **Have they skipped any of these before?** If so, why?
 - Reasons may include financial hardship, cultural differences, lack of transportation or childcare, living in a remote area or not having a primary care provider, among other barriers.
 - Help the patient consider ways to mitigate barriers so they can schedule necessary visits.
- Tell the patient why **knowing their family health history can help their care team** prevent and screen for inherited chronic diseases. Ask the patient to write down which, if any, of their close relatives on both sides of their family have been diagnosed with cancer, diabetes, heart disease, etc. Suggest sharing the list with their care team and family members.

Build skills:

Help the patient overcome any barriers to care and prepare for upcoming appointments.

- Have the patient **describe a screening or wellness visit that went well and one that didn't**. Ask them:
 - What were the differences?
 - Did their providers answer their questions and listen to their concerns? Did the patient understand their providers' instructions and explanations? Did they feel included in the decision-making? What can the patient do to help make their next appointment successful?

Build confidence:

Challenge them to make healthier lifestyle choices as part of their preventive care.

- Talk about how **preventive care is just as much the patient's responsibility as their care team's**. Making healthy lifestyle choices—such as eating nutritious foods, staying hydrated, getting enough sleep and exercise, avoiding smoking and prioritizing their mental health—can help lower their risk of disease, disability and death.
- Ask the patient which aspect of their health (e.g., nutrition, hydration, fitness, sleep, mental health) has been the easiest to manage. **Encourage them to come up with a slightly more challenging—but still achievable—goal** to further improve this aspect.
- Ask the patient which aspect of their health has been the most difficult to manage. **Together, come up with one simple thing the patient can start doing today** to improve that aspect.
- Help the patient understand that if they **start small and gradually build**, the aspect of their health that's most difficult to manage today will eventually feel just as easy to manage as the others.

