



Tips for Preventive Health Screenings

by David V. Hansen, MD Radiology

I feel fortunate to have a profession in Radiology. As a board-certified Diagnostic Radiologist, I've witnessed significant leaps in technology that have allowed increasingly accurate identification of serious health conditions. The ability to have a clear view of what's going on in a patient's body can be essential for diagnosis, treatment and recovery. There are different types of medical imaging equipment that help in this area including ultrasound, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), CT scans, X-ray and mammography.

It's equally important to know how, when and why to use diagnostic radiology for preventive care. In these instances, no symptoms or family history concerns may be present; however, these screenings are important to have done to ensure continued good health. For example, mammography has become a key tool for detecting breast cancer before the disease may become unmanageable. Colonoscopy is the gold standard for early detection of colorectal cancer. There are many reasons to be grateful for continually-evolving medical imaging technology that makes it possible for people to live long healthy lives. By utilizing what's available and following your doctor's recommendations, preventive screenings can become a form of health insurance!

We've probably all seen or heard about mobile screening units that visit towns offering quick screening tests for any number of maladies. Advertisements tell us to get a full-body CT Scan or to stop-by for a quick ultrasound of our blood vessels or heart, regardless of a lack of symptoms or lack of a physician's recommendation. Oftentimes, these services are offered by non-medical companies and may result in unnecessary costs, worry, or a false sense of security for the customer. In my professional capacity, I find myself helping patients referred for a full screening exam after they have paid for a brief, incomplete review by one of these mobile companies.

Before becoming a Radiologist, I fulfilled nine years of service as a Family Practice Physician. I'm very supportive of appropriate imaging used for patients in the evaluation of their problems, especially when justified by appropriate indications for patient and health care provider concerns. We all need to become more proactive about our health and one step toward that goal is to take advantage of preventive care screenings. Prior to sending yourself through a radiated tube or under an ultrasound wand, please make sure that these types of screening tests are being directed by your personal healthcare provider, and that the services are being rendered by a certified, skilled technician who can communicate results with your healthcare team for follow-up.

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