

Journey to Wellness — A free self-guided healthy living program

# Champion your health



Amid our busy lives, our health often takes a backseat — especially when it isn't a priority unless we feel ill. However, preventive healthcare and **self-advocacy are essential ways to care for yourself.** They empower us to maintain well-being and catch potential issues early. Learn ways to champion your health and contribute more to making important health decisions.

## What does it mean to champion your health?

Championing your health involves actively advocating for your well-being. Self-advocacy is the act of speaking up for yourself and your interests. It involves understanding your needs, asserting your rights and effectively communicating those to others. It means taking proactive steps to maintain better health.

## How can you champion your health?

To champion your health, consider these steps:

### **Establish a relationship with a primary care provider.**

Regular check-ups and annual physical exams are essential. Having one provider allows that provider to get to know you and your health, which helps them personalize and streamline your care.

**Get preventive health screenings.** Stay up to date on age-appropriate screenings and vaccinations. Early detection is crucial.

**Know your numbers.** Know your blood pressure, cholesterol levels, blood sugar value and body mass index (BMI). Understand what these vital signs mean for you.

**Seek regular dental care.** Regular dental visits contribute to overall health, including a lower risk for heart attack and other heart conditions.

**Stay informed.** Keep up with health research and relevant topics.

**Know your family history.** Your family medical history provides valuable insights into diseases or conditions that may run in your family.

**Consider genetic testing.** Genetic testing can help guide decisions about medical care and family planning, may reveal your risk for developing specific conditions, and can also help diagnose and assess the severity of diseases.

**Understand your risks.** While certain risks — such as hereditary factors, age, race or ethnicity — are beyond our control, there are risk factors you can influence. Some risk factors, such as smoking, are associated with multiple diseases or conditions.

**Understand your rights as a patient.** Do not be afraid to speak up and ask questions if you need clarification or if something doesn't feel right.

**Recognize serious symptoms.** Know when to seek professional help, and don't be afraid to seek help if your symptoms are worrisome.

**Communicate effectively.** Share information and be honest with your healthcare provider. Tell them about concerns and difficulties you are having in your personal life. Having an open and honest relationship with your healthcare provider will make it easier to meet your needs.

**Don't give up.** Championing your health is an ongoing process that takes time and commitment. You may encounter setbacks or hurdles, but you are your own best advocate.

Information adapted from "Maintaining good health," "Prevention and wellness: Adult schedule," "The power of prevention" and "What is self-advocacy?"

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MC4770-45