

Healthwise

A PERS Health Insurance Program newsletter



FALL 2011

Glaucoma and osteoporosis testing

One inevitable fact of life is that your body changes as it ages. Two important health issues that can arise as you get older are glaucoma and osteoporosis.

Glaucoma

Glaucoma is the name for a group of eye diseases that damage the optic nerve, which is in the back of your eye. When the nerve is damaged, you can lose your vision.

Two types of glaucoma occur in adults:

- **Open-angle** glaucoma is the most common. It damages the optic nerve bit by bit, slowly leading to loss of sight. At first, you lose side (peripheral) vision. One eye may be affected more than the other. Sometimes much of your eyesight may be lost before you notice it because the eye that is not affected makes up for the loss and you feel no pain or discomfort.
- **Closed-angle** glaucoma comes on suddenly and can lead to permanent eye damage in only hours. Fortunately, it is a rare disease. Symptoms include severe eye pain, blurred

vision, redness of the eye, and sometimes nausea or vomiting. Call your health professional immediately if you ever develop these symptoms.

Finding and treating glaucoma early is important to prevent blindness. If you are at risk for the disease, be sure to get checked by an eye specialist even if you have no symptoms.

Risk factors include:

- You have a family history of open-angle glaucoma.
- You are older than 65 (the American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends that all people be screened for glaucoma every two to four years after age 40 and every one to two years after age 65).
- You are African-American.
- You have diabetes.
- You have high blood pressure.
- You have had an eye injury or eye surgery.

Your eye doctor (ophthalmologist or optometrist) will look for signs of damage in the back of your eyes to help determine whether the disease is present and to

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Maintain your Medicare Part B coverage

If you are eligible for Medicare, you must be enrolled in, and retain, Medicare Parts A and B to be eligible for PERS Medicare health plans. If you lose your Part B coverage by disenrolling or not paying your monthly Part B premium, you and/or your dependents will be terminated from the PERS Health Insurance Program without an opportunity to re-enroll.

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Immunizations are important to your health

Immunizations are not just for kids; however, many adults still fail to be vaccinated. A vaccine is a medication (usually an injection) that gives patients immunity to certain viral illnesses. While many people consider conditions like the flu to be just an annoyance, they can be serious, even fatal. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that each year more than 30,000 people die from influenza and pneumococcal infections, and over 200,000 people are hospitalized with these conditions. Vaccines are a tremendously important and effective way to prevent illness and maintain your overall well being.

The three most important immunizations for adults are:

Flu (influenza vaccine).

Recommended for all individuals over the age of 50. This vaccine is repeated every year because the viral strains

that cause the flu frequently change. Last year's flu shot won't protect you against this year's flu. Protection lasts only about a year. You cannot get the flu from a flu shot. The CDC recommends that you get your annual influenza vaccine as soon as the vaccine is available.

Pneumonia (pneumococcal vaccine). Recommended for all individuals with certain chronic medical conditions, including heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, alcoholism and liver disease. Healthy people over age 65 need it, too. For most people, this is a one-time vaccine; however, if you are over 65 and have received a pneumococcal vaccine before age 65, talk with your doctor and see if a second vaccine is appropriate for you.

Shingles (zoster vaccine).

Recommended one time for all individuals over the age of 60, regardless of previous exposure to herpes zoster or

chickenpox. Shingles is an extremely painful rash caused by the zoster virus — the same virus that causes chickenpox. After a person recovers from chickenpox, the virus stays in the body and can reappear years later, causing shingles. Please talk with your provider about this vaccine.

How are these immunizations covered by my insurance?

Flu and pneumonia vaccines are covered for everyone on Medicare with no copay. Please check with your health plan for information on where you can receive these vaccines at no cost.

The shingles vaccine is covered for people on Medicare with a Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit. Your cost for this vaccine will vary depending on the Part D prescription drug benefit your plan offers. Please check with your drug plan for specific information.

*Courtesy of Vera Delevan, M.S.N., R.N.
PacificSource Medicare*

*For a complete list of brand-name and generic medications covered under your current ODS, Providence or PacificSource PERS prescription drug benefit, please visit ODS online at **www.odscompanies.com/members** or log on to your myODS account and consult the PERS Prescription Drug Plan List of Covered Drugs. You may also contact ODS Pharmacy Customer Service for additional information at 503-265-4709 or 888-786-7509.*

PERS 2011 Plan Change Meeting Schedule

Pre-registration not required

AREA	DATE	TIME	SITE
<i>Portland</i>	9/12/11 Monday	9:30 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.	Embassy Suites - PDX (Portland Airport) 7900 NE 82nd Ave. (Pines Room)
<i>Gresham</i>	9/13/11 Tuesday	9:30 a.m.	Holiday Inn Express 2752 NE Hogan Dr.
<i>Oregon City</i>	9/13/11 Tuesday	1:30 p.m.	Providence Willamette Falls Community Center 519 15th St. (Auditorium)
<i>Eugene</i>	9/14/11 Wednesday	9:30 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.	Lane Community College Center for Meeting and Learning 4000 E 30th Ave., Bldg. 19, Room 102
<i>Keizer</i>	9/15/11 Thursday	9:30 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.	Keizer Civic Center 930 Chemawa Rd. NE
<i>Prineville</i>	9/19/11 Monday	2:30 p.m.	Meadow Lake Golf Course 300 SW Meadow Lakes Dr.
<i>John Day</i>	9/20/11 Tuesday	9:30 a.m.	National Forest of Malheur County 431 Patterson Bridge Rd. (Juniper Hall)
<i>Hines/Burns</i>	9/20/11 Tuesday	2 p.m.	Best Western - Rory & Ryan Inns 534 Hwy 20 North
<i>Ontario</i>	9/21/11 Wednesday	9:30 a.m.	Four Rivers Cultural Center 676 SW 5th Ave., (Collins Gallery)
<i>Baker City</i>	9/21/11 Wednesday	2:00 p.m.	Geiser Grand Hotel 1996 Main St. (Queen City Center)
<i>La Grande</i>	9/22/11 Thursday	9 a.m.	Blue Mt. Conference Center 404 12th St.
<i>Pendleton</i>	9/22/11 Thursday	2 p.m.	Vert Club Room 345 SW 4th St.
<i>The Dalles</i>	9/23/11 Friday	9:30 a.m.	The Dalles Civic Auditorium 323 East Fourth St.
<i>Hood River</i>	9/23/11 Friday	1:30 p.m.	Hood River Valley Adult Center 2010 Sterling Place
<i>Roseburg</i>	9/26/11 Monday	9:30 a.m.	Douglas County Fairgrounds Complex 2110 SW Frear St. (Cascade West)
<i>Grants Pass</i>	9/26/11 Monday	2 p.m.	Taprock Events Center at the Lodge at Riverside 955 SE 7th St. (Maple Room)

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AREA	DATE	TIME	SITE
<i>Medford</i>	9/27/11 Tuesday	1 p.m.	Rogue Regency Inn & Suites 2300 Biddle Rd.
<i>Klamath Falls</i>	9/28/11 Wednesday	9 a.m.	Klamath County Fairgrounds 3531 South Sixth St. Meeting Room A
<i>La Pine</i>	9/28/11 Wednesday	2:30 p.m.	La Pine Senior Center 16450 Victory Way
<i>Bend</i>	9/29/11 Thursday	9:30 a.m.	Shilo Inn Suites Hotel 3105 OB Riley Rd.
<i>Salem</i>	10/3/11 Monday	9:30 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.	Red Lion Hotel 3301 Market St. NE
<i>Corvallis</i>	10/4/11 Tuesday	9:30 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.	Corvallis Country Club 1850 SW Whiteside Dr.
<i>Albany</i>	10/5/11 Wednesday	9:30 a.m.	Linn County Fair & Expo 3700 Knox Butte Rd. E (Conference Rooms 1 and 2)
<i>McMinnville</i>	10/5/11 Wednesday	2:30 p.m.	McMinnville Senior Center 2250 NE McDaniel Lane
<i>Beaverton</i>	10/6/11 Thursday	9:30 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.	Shilo Inn & Suites 9900 SW Canyon Rd.
<i>St. Helens</i>	10/10/11 Monday	3 p.m.	Columbia Learning Center 375 S 18th St.
<i>Astoria</i>	10/11/11 Tuesday	9:30 a.m.	Holiday Inn Express 204 W Marine Dr.
<i>Tillamook</i>	10/11/11 Tuesday	2:30 p.m.	Shilo Inn 2515 N Main St. (Wilson Room)
<i>Lincoln City</i>	10/12/11 Wednesday	9 a.m.	Liberty Inn 4990 NE Logan Rd.
<i>Florence</i>	10/12/11 Wednesday	2:30 p.m.	Florence Events Center 715 Quince St.
<i>Coos Bay/ N. Bend</i>	10/13/11 Thursday	10 a.m.	Red Lion Hotel 1313 N Bayshore Dr. (Umpqua Ballroom)
<i>Salem</i>	10/14/11 Friday	10 a.m.	Red Lion Hotel 3301 Market St. NE

determine its severity. Your medical history and the results of the following tests help determine the severity of glaucoma:

- Tonometry measures the pressure in the eye, called “intraocular pressure,” or IOP. Normal IOP is usually between 10 and 21 millimeters of mercury (mm Hg). People with glaucoma sometimes have above-normal IOP.
- Slit-lamp exam is used to get a magnified view of all parts of the eye. Gonioscopy and tonometry can be done as part of a slit-lamp exam.
- Vision tests to measure how clearly you are able to see details can detect loss of vision that may indicate damage to the optic nerve caused by glaucoma.
- Cornea thickness tests such as ultrasound pachymetry measure the thickness of the clear front surface of the eye (cornea). Cornea thickness, along with intraocular pressure, helps determine your risk of developing glaucoma.
- Gonioscopy uses a special lens to examine the drainage angles of the eyes.

Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis is a disease that affects your bones, causing them to become thin, brittle and easy to break. Broken bones (fractures) — especially those in the hip, spine and wrist — can be disabling and can make it hard for you to live on your own.

Osteoporosis affects millions of older adults. It usually strikes after age 60. It's most common in women, but men can get it too.

Risk factors include:

- Age — your risk goes up as you get older.
- Being a woman who has gone through menopause — after menopause, the body makes less estrogen, which protects you from bone loss.
- Family background — osteoporosis tends to run in families.
- Having a slender body frame.

- Your heritage — people of European and Asian background are most likely to get osteoporosis.
- Smoking.
- Not getting enough weight-bearing exercise.
- Drinking too much alcohol.
- Not getting enough calcium and vitamin D in the things you eat or from supplements.

Osteoporosis can be very far along before you notice it. Sometimes the first sign is a broken bone after a bump or fall. As the disease gets worse, you may have other signs, such as pain in your back, loss of height or a curved upper back.

It's important to find and treat osteoporosis early to prevent bone fractures. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force advises routine bone density testing for women age 65 and older. If you have a higher risk for fractures, it's best to start getting the test at age 60. Men between ages 65 and 70 should have their first talk with their doctors about osteoporosis and get a bone density test if they are at risk.

A screening test may also be recommended if you have:

- A fracture in a minor injury that may have been caused by osteoporosis.
- Another medical condition that is known to cause bone thinning.

Your doctor will ask about your symptoms and do a physical exam. You may also have an X-ray called a Dual X-Ray Absorptiometry (DEXA) test. X-rays are taken of your hip and spine to measure bone thickness.

Next steps

Talk with your doctor if you have any questions or concerns about glaucoma or osteoporosis. Getting information and making healthy choices can help you feel your best for all the years to come.

Courtesy of Kaiser Permanente®

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Dental

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Pharmacy

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