Being a Wise Health Care Consumer

Wise health care consumers are not just passive recipients of health care; they play an active role in the decisions about their health. From selecting a health plan, to finding a physician, to choosing between treatment options, they confidently direct their health care experience.

Here are a few tips to help you become a savvy health care consumer:

Know what is covered under your health plan
Finding out after-the-fact that your health plan did not cover a specific test or procedure can be costly and stressful. Since health insurance plans can vary greatly, even from year to year, it is important to check with your health plan ahead of time to find out what is covered. This also gives you a chance to discuss alternative options with your health care provider, or make financial arrangements in advance.

Create a medical portfolio
Being organized can make navigating the complex health care system a little easier. By keeping a personal record of your health history, you can make sure your health care team has the necessary information to guide you. Obtain copies of your medical records so you and other family members can access them in a centralized location when you need to.

Consult with your health care team
Medical providers are specialized advisers, helping you make important decisions about your care. Always consult with your health care team to ask questions about risks, alternative treatment options, and what to expect before, during and after a test, procedure, or treatment.

Seek evidence-based health information
Finding trusted health information can be a challenge. Since many websites offer opinions rather than facts, it is important to be cautious when you surf the web. Look for articles that have been written by credentialed health care professionals and include links to peer-reviewed research journals. Websites with ".org" or ".gov" in the domain name are typically from reputable sources like universities and nationally recognized organizations.

Consider including the following:
- Legal documents (Living Will, Advanced Directives, Power of Attorney, etc.)
- Insurance coverage information
- Lab and test results
- Immunization records
- Medication and supplement lists
- Family history
- Provider contact information
E-Cigarettes and Vaping: Still Bad

The first electronic cigarette was patented in 1963, but devices did not enter the US and Canadian markets until 2007 and 2018, respectively. Other names for e-cigarettes include vapes, e-hookahs, vape pens, and electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS).

Vaping, the inhalation of a heated liquid that has been converted to vapor, has increased rapidly in popularity in recent years, which has many health experts concerned.

Products used in these devices vary greatly and have been found to contain additives, heavy metals, carcinogens, and other contaminants that cause damage to the brain, heart and lungs. As of 2014, there were over 7,700 e-cigarette flavors on the market, and medical conditions like “popcorn lung,” which is characterized by scarring of the lungs, has been associated with some of these flavorings.

As new health risks surface, it is clear that vaping is not harmless. Like conventional cigarettes, vaping has been linked to cancer and preterm births, and tobacco is still a leading cause of death in both the US and Canada, regardless of the delivery device. While some have claimed that e-cigarettes are an effective smoking cessation tool, supportive evidence is lacking, and research has shown that the lifespan of a smoker is about 10 years shorter than a non-smoker.

Protecting your lungs from harmful substances found in conventional cigarettes and other devices makes good sense when it comes to good health.

Resources:

If you need help quitting tobacco (conventional cigarettes or e-cigarettes)

1-800-QUITNOW


To report a problem to the FDA related to a tobacco product


1. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/bjpsych-advances/article/everything-you-wanted-to-know-about-ecigarettes-and-vaping-but-were-afraid-to-ask-a-guide-for-mental-health-clini-
cians/F2FDC01A56EF39D31D7AEF0BB5CD49D0
health-smoking.html
Misconceptions About Mental Health

The World Health Organization defines mental health as “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.” Mental disorders, on the other hand, are disruptions that can have a negative impact on your thoughts, moods, and behaviors.

Not all mental health concerns are medically diagnosable conditions. Sudden life-changing events, such as the loss of a loved one, are not considered mental disorders. It is when ongoing signs and symptoms have a negative impact on your ability to function that concerns become diagnoses like depression, anxiety, disordered eating, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and dementia.

While there has been an increased focus on mental health in recent years, there are still many misconceptions. Here are a few:

**Myth #1:** Those with mental health disorders are dangerous.

**TRUTH:** Less than 5% of violent crimes can be attributed to mental illness. In fact, those who struggle with a mental health disorder are more likely to be victims of crimes.

**Myth #2:** Medications are always necessary to correct mental health issues.

**TRUTH:** Not all mental health disorders require medication. Other treatments include therapy, community support groups, and self-help strategies like meditation and exercise.

**Myth #3:** Mental disorders are rare.

**TRUTH:** According to the World Health Organization, 1 in 4 people globally will be impacted by a mental disorder at some point over the course of their lives.

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Turkey and Sweet Potato Chowder

INGREDIENTS
- 1 large potato, peeled, if desired, and chopped
- 1 14 ounce can reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 2 small ears frozen corn on the cob, thawed, or 1 cup loosely packed frozen whole kernel corn
- 12 ounces cooked turkey breast, cut into 1/2 inch cubes
- 1 1/2 cups fat-free milk
- 1 large sweet potato peeled and cut into 3/4 inch cubes
- 1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/4 cup coarsely snipped fresh flat-leaf parsley

INSTRUCTIONS
1. In a 3-quart saucepan, combine chopped potato and chicken broth. Bring to boiling; reduce heat. Simmer, uncovered, about 12 minutes or until potato is tender, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat. Do not drain. Using a potato masher, mash potato until mixture is thickened and nearly smooth.

2. If using corn on the cob, cut the kernels from one of the ears of corn. Carefully cut the second ear of corn crosswise into 1/2-inch-thick slices.

3. Stir corn, turkey, milk, sweet potato, and pepper into potato mixture in saucepan. Bring to boiling; reduce heat. Cover and cook for 12 to 15 minutes or until sweet potato is tender.


Total Time (Cook and Prep): 50 minutes
Servings: 5

NUTRITION INFO
(per serving)
- Calories 216
- Fat 1g
- Sodium 271mg
- Carbohydrates 29g
- Fiber 4g
- Protein 23g

Source: Navigate Wellbeing Solutions Recipe Library

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