**Take Command of Your Health: Episode 1**

**Early Detection is Key**

**Jan. 28, 2021**

**Transcript**

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Anthony Vieira:

You’re listening to the Get to Know TRICARE Podcast: your resource for information to help you get the most out of your TRICARE benefit.

Hi there. I’m Anthony Vieira from the TRICARE Publications Team at the Defense Health Agency. Welcome to our new podcast series called Take Command of Your Health. In this series, we discuss a wide range of TRICARE covered services. But today, we’ll focus mainly on preventive health.

I recently had a chance to sit down with Dr. James Black. Dr. Black is the medical director of the clinical support division at the DHA. With more than 12 years of service at the DHA, he had a wealth of knowledge to share with me.

Take a listen.

[interview]

Dr. Black, thank you for joining the podcast. It’s a pleasure to have you on.

Dr. Black:

Anthony, appreciate the opportunity to speak on this important topic. And thanks for inviting me.

Anthony Vieira:

You bet. So when you think about healthy living—you have diet, you have exercise, obviously those things are very important. But you say, perhaps, one of the biggest keys to healthy living is preventive services. Why?

Dr. Black:

Well, there are many risk factors leading to illness and premature death that are preventable. These preventive health care services are basic medical services your doctor or health care provider offer to keep you healthy. These may include checkups, patient counseling, health screenings, and immunizations. These help your provider prevent and detect diseases early. Early detection certainly saves lives, increases treatment options, and can even save you money.

Regular provider visits can help you establish good communication and allow you to feel comfortable asking questions. You can also do a telehealth visit with your provider to discuss obtaining any necessary services such as vaccinations.

Anthony Vieira:

That’s very, very important. You know, Dr. Black, there’s this common misconception out there that if you’re young and you’re healthy that you don’t need to see your doctor. But that’s probably not the best approach to take, is it?

Dr. Black:

No, it’s not. In fact, you know, preventive services, you know, start almost as soon as you’re born with newborn screening tests. So again, just because you feel young and healthy doesn’t mean that preventive screenings are not an important part of the health care that’s offered to you.

Anthony Vieira:

And what are some of the preventive health services offered to TRICARE beneficiaries?

Dr. Black:

Well, TRICARE covers a wide variety of preventive health screenings. Health screenings are really tests that look for diseases before you have symptoms. They can find diseases early and when they’re easier to treat. Some of these screenings include those for breast cancer, colon cancer, blood pressure checks, hepatitis B and C lab tests, and cholesterol testing.

Anthony Vieira:

Just a quick reminder for our listeners—these are all services that are covered under your benefit. So, it doesn’t matter if you have TRICARE Prime, TRICARE Select, or a premium-based plan.

So, let’s talk a little bit about where you can get these services, Dr. Black. Can you just go to your PCM and get care?

Dr. Black:

Well, you certainly can if you’re TRICARE Prime. And if you’re enrolled to a military hospital or clinic, you can get these preventive services there. They can also use network providers or non-network providers. An important thing to remember is that a referral or pre-authorization is not required for most preventive services.

Anthony Vieira:

And seeing a network provider as opposed to a non-network provider can save you money, right?

Dr. Black:

Yes. We would highly encourage everyone to, you know, if you’re going into the private sector to use network providers.

Anthony Vieira:

OK. I understand that some beneficiaries are eligible for the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Exam. Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

Dr. Black:

I’d be glad to. We usually just say HP&DP exam for short. Since it’s such a long name.

But for beneficiaries six years of age and older, one exam is covered annually for TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select. Services include routine eye exams, tuberculosis testing, HIV testing, prenatal screening, osteoporosis screening, type 2 diabetes glucose testing for those with high blood pressure and adults between 40 and 70 years of age who are overweight or obese.

There are no copayments for these exams for TRICARE Prime and TRICARE Select.

For beneficiaries under age six, preventive services are provided under the well-child care benefit. These services follow the American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines.

Anthony Vieira:

Well, it’s certainly good to know that TRICARE beneficiaries have many options to choose from. And just a quick note for our listeners: if you want to learn more about the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Exam, just go to TRICARE.mil/hpdp.

So, what about out-of-pocket costs? If you go to see your doctor for preventive health services, can you expect to pay anything out of pocket? Is this something that depends on your plan?

Dr. Black:

Yes, it depends on your plan and the type of provider you see. As we mentioned earlier, using network or non-network providers. You’ll pay nothing out of pocket for care received at a TRICARE network provider or at a military hospital or clinic. If you use a non-network provider, you won’t pay anything for cancer screenings, immunizations, well-child visits for children under age six.

You may pay non-network cost-shares for all other preventive services even if rendered at the same time as a covered cancer screening or immunization.

Anthony Vieira:

And of course, you can learn more about out-of-pocket costs by going to the TRICARE Publications page. Just visit TRICARE.mil/publications and download the publication of your choice. The *TRICARE Costs and Fees Sheet* is especially helpful because it outlines any out-of-pocket costs you may have when you go to see your doctor. It also has information about prescription drug costs as well.

Before we wrap up, Dr. Black, I just want to touch on heart health for a quick second. According to the CDC, heart disease is the number 1 killer of men and women here in the United States. Can you share a little bit more about the heart health services that beneficiaries can get?

Dr. Black:

Sure, Anthony. I mean, it’s no doubt that a healthy heart is essential to good overall health, and cardiovascular disease screenings are a covered benefit. These include cholesterol, lipid lab tests, and blood pressure checks. But also, education and counseling are covered for such things as diet assessment, nutrition, physical activity and exercise, and tobacco and alcohol abuse.

All of these can have an impact on maintaining a healthy heart.

Anthony Vieira:

Very, very important. In the spirit of taking command of your health and staying healthy, this conversation is a good reminder for all beneficiaries to see their doctors, including myself. I know I need to see my doctor soon, too.

Dr. Black:

Well, of course. And as we talked about, just because you’re young and healthy—or even older and feeling healthy—that going in and getting these preventive screenings are extremely important and, as noted, if a disease is caught earlier, it’s usually much easier to treat and have a better chance for a successful outcome.

Anthony Vieira:

Perfect. Is there anything else you’d like to share about TRICARE preventive health services?

Dr. Black:

I would just say that TRICARE offers a wide variety of preventive services, and certainly our focus is keeping our beneficiaries healthy. And this is one of the first steps that one can take in doing that. So, you know, healthy lifestyle but also annual exams and keeping up with all the preventive services recommended for your age or sex is very important for your long term health.

Anthony Vieira:

Well, this is great information that can help so many beneficiaries. Dr. Black, it’s always a pleasure. Thanks again for coming on to the podcast. I hope you have a great day.

Dr. Black:

Well, same to you. And again, thank you for this opportunity to speak on this very important topic.

Anthony Vieira:

That’s it for today’s episode on preventive health care. Make sure you go to TRICARE.mil/preventive for the latest information. And don’t forget to tune in to our next episode of the Take Command of Your Health series: Keeping Your Mouth Healthy.

For the Get to Know TRICARE Podcast, I’m Anthony Vieira.

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Thanks for listening. We’ll be back with another edition of the Get to Know TRICARE Podcast soon. For the latest TRICARE news, be sure to visit our website at TRICARE.mil. And don’t forget to contact your TRICARE contractor or your local military hospital or clinic if you have questions or need assistance.

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