

Your Health Means Everything: Taking Care of Yourself in a Post-Pandemic World

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Life has changed in ways both big and small over the last year. Plans were suspended and priorities shifted as we cautiously made our way through a situation that we had never experienced, much less imagined would happen. As we get closer than ever to putting the COVID-19 pandemic behind us – thanks to wider vaccine distribution and safe practices to slow the spread of the virus – many of us are looking forward to getting back to the things we’ve been missing – planned vacations on pause, suspended social gatherings, even just dropping by a friend’s or loved one’s for a coffee catch-up.

There is one priority, however, that we have all shared during the pandemic that should remain high on your list: your health. If there is one thing, we have collectively learned over the last year it is that – in short – your health means everything.

We have put a lot of time and energy into protecting ourselves and others from COVID-19, and that is very important and worthwhile. But taking care of your health means a lot more than successfully staying virus-free. It means taking charge of your health so you can stay on top of any issues that arise before they become serious. It means not delaying the care you need to feel better and get healthier so you can fully enjoy all of those things we’ve been missing lately. Here are some of the most important ways you can keep your health a priority in the months and years to come.

Schedule screen time

No, not *that* kind of screen time. We’re talking health screenings that are important road markers on your health journey – like annual mammograms if you’re a woman who’s 40 and up, annual colonoscopies if you’re 45 and older and low dose CT screening if you’re a current or former smoker. Screenings like these can help detect cancer early and allow for easier and more effective treatment. And remember, if you’re at higher risk, you may need to start annual screenings like mammograms and colonoscopies earlier. Talk to your doctor about your risks and the right timing for you. It’s no surprise that American Cancer Society researchers estimate that almost 1.9 million new cancer cases will be diagnosed in 2021, and the ACS is projecting an increase in late-stage diagnoses and preventable cancer deaths due to delayed care. If you’ve been putting off your screening during this last year, now’s a great time to get it on the calendar and get the peace of mind it can bring.

Check in with a check-up

Like regular screenings, annual well visits with a trusted primary care provider play a key role in your overall health and well-being. That goes for all ages. They help you and your provider establish a trusting and informed relationship that can help you both stay up to date on your unique health needs and stay on top of any issues that may arise. Knowing your family medical history and health risks, your provider can help you keep track of those annual screenings, as well as any potential issues to watch out for.

Don’t gamble with your health

Emergencies are called emergencies for a reason. When one puts your health at immediate risk, it is vital that you get the care you need as soon as possible. Don’t wait, because an emergency will not

wait on you. If you're experiencing chest pain or any emergency, minutes do matter. It is critical that you get to the hospital and get the care you need *right* when you need it.

Live healthy

Creating good habits and routines can go a long way towards keeping you healthy and ready to embrace all life has to offer. Eating healthy, engaging in regular physical activity, getting enough sleep, reducing stress and taking care of your mental health all have major benefits for your health, and can help reduce your risk for certain diseases. If you're struggling in any of these areas or just aren't sure where to get started, talk with your primary care provider. They can help you with advice or point you in the direction of any specialized care you may need to feel your best.

Your health affects every other aspect of your life. Without it, it's a lot more difficult to enjoy the people and things in your life that bring you joy. So, don't make it wait. Get the care you need. Start a new healthy habit. Schedule that check-up and screening. Take care of your health. It means everything.

If you are looking for a provider, need to schedule a screening or looking to make an appointment, KershawHealth can help. Visit KershawHealth.org to get connected with the care you need.