

## Women's Care Medical Group/Stanford Children's Health

Newsletter—Autumn 2019

- 1. "Telehealth" visits:** Women's Care is now scheduling virtual visits in appropriate situations: you would access the visit through the camera on your smart phone, iPad, laptop or desktop and your physician would speak to you through a camera on a computer in our office; this would save you travel and parking time—a serious cause of anxiety in our crowded and busy Bay Area lives. The Telehealth visits would be scheduled with the doctor and charged to you as would the same length office visit; you would be contacted by our office just before the scheduled time to complete registration. Situations where this would be appropriate are: consultations about menopause, anxiety and depression, weight and sleep issues, trying to conceive, and adjustment of medications. A virtual visit is not appropriate if you need a breast or pelvic exam, or if this is a postoperative visit. Phone calls lasting less than 5 minutes to review lab results would still be done as normal without cost to you and don't necessitate scheduling a telehealth visit.
- 2. Postpartum depression:** Obstetricians are focusing more on mom's feelings and moods after delivery. You will notice more questions directed to new moms and more opportunity to touch base with the doctor via Telehealth to avoid bringing a newborn into our office and disrupting the already full schedule of a new mom.
- 3. Vaccinations:** Measles: If you are unsure about vaccination, you can either get a blood test for titre of antibodies or just have the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) booster (one injection). Influenza: This vaccination is strongly recommended for almost everyone—there have already been two deaths in Santa Clara County from the current flu. Human papilloma virus (HPV): (A series of 3 injections for women up to age 26, and for selected women after that age. Shingles: The new Shingrix vaccine is a series of injections that are recommended after age 50 and are available without a prescription at Costco and most pharmacies.
- 4. Sleep:** Sleep is so important for a healthy body, a strong immune system and a functioning brain. Time spent during deep sleep is time when our brains repair damage sustained during daily wear and tear and transfer short-term

memories into long-term memory banks. To learn more about all aspects of sleep, check out “How to Sleep Well” by Dr. Neil Stanley.

- 5. Stress management:** You can never control what is happening in the world, in our country, or even in your family—but you can control how you let it affect you and that is the definition of stress. Research since 1993 has focused on the relationship of stress to emotional states and the effect of stress on the autonomic nervous system, the hormonal and immune systems, heart and brain. We recommend mindfulness meditation, yoga, HeartMath ([www.heartmath.com](http://www.heartmath.com)) and music! Yes, **music** has been shown to elicit brain waves that are restorative and calming.
- 6. Sugar-sweetened beverages:** Did you know that sports and energy drinks are overtaking soda as the primary source of liquid sugar in kids’ diets? Drinking beverages that contain added sweeteners is linked to adults and children becoming overweight or obese, which increases the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, liver disease, dental decay and other health problems.
- 7. “Do I need an annual exam?” YES:** it is a once-a-year opportunity to touch base with a physician and make sure your lifestyle and treatments are appropriate for both illness and continued great health. We make every effort to avoid redundant and allow time for you to voice your personal concerns. Most plans offer this as an annual opportunity, so why waste it? Some still call it an “annual pap” but it is SO MUCH MORE!
- 8. Medicare women’s annual visit:** The rules for annual exams for patients with Medicare are slightly different. Under Medicare, you are entitled to a G0101 visit every TWO years, which consists of a pap, if needed, to rule out cancer, and the ordering of a mammogram. This visit is completely paid by Medicare with no bill to you. The G0101 visit is not a follow-up for known gynecological problems or concerns, but only a “well woman” disease check. Other visits under Medicare require that the doctor state the complaint or problem you presented and determine a diagnosis at the end of the visit. These visits are given an E/M code and are subject to co-pays and deductibles. There is no limit to how many of these E/M visits you have under Medicare as long as all the codes are listed to justify the time spent with the doctor as well as the tests or treatments that are ordered. At the beginning of any visit that is listed on our schedule as “annual visit” the doctor will clarify with you whether it

meets the criteria for a G0101 (free visit) or E/M visit (you will pay some portion as usual through copay and deductible).

- 9. HPV and cancer:** Those same HPV DNA fragments can be found in vaginal, vulvar, anal and throat cells and account for most squamous cell cancers. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that cancers linked to HPV have increased significantly over the past 15 years with throat cancer now the most common HPV-related malignancy: 43,000 new cases in 2015 alone. HPV vaccination rates around the world rates are also rising with nearly half of those aged 13-17 having received all the recommended doses, and two thirds having received the first dose. Already there is a marked decrease in new cervical cancer incidence around the world in both men and women who had been vaccinated.
- 10. Primary care doctors:** Under Medicare rules, gynecologists are NOT primary care but are specialist doctors for patients who have Medicare insurance. Healthy patients between the ages of 18 and 65 may be able to use our services for all their care and we will recommend referrals to specialists for issues beyond our scope.
- 11. Pap smears:** a pap smear has a 10% false negative rate but by also testing for HPV DNA, the test is almost 100% accurate at diagnosing and predicting risk of severe dysplasia and cervical cancer. The frequency of testing depends on many factors and our advice is guided by long-term data from clinical studies in the United States. If you receive a call that your pap smear shows HPV DNA, it doesn't mean you have active virus in your system, but that past exposure left fragments of the HPV DNA in the nucleus of cervical cells. Keeping a close watch and knowing when to intervene and treat is the job of your gynecologist at that annual visit.
- 12. Dense breasts:** There is a new law that requires breast centers to notify patients who have very dense breasts because they are more likely to miss signs of a breast cancer and those patients are more likely to have breast cancer in their lifetime. The screening mammogram is covered 100% by most health plans but the cost of any additional testing (whether a closer/diagnostic mammogram or an ultrasound) would go against their deductible. We have had patients receive bills in excess of \$1000 for these additional tests done for "reassurance". Whether you should schedule this additional breast surveillance in the absence of concern from the radiologist depends on your

personal worries and fears and your personal assessment of cost vs benefit. If a radiologist sees something suspicious or uncertain on the screening mammogram, he or she will not hesitate to recommend additional testing.

**13. Office pregnancies:** Our medical assistant Melissa has welcomed a daughter; our advice nurse, Cyrell, is counting the days left, and Dr. Anjie Li will start maternity leave in early 2020!

**14. Farewell** to our nurse Tracey who is returning to her family home in the United Kingdom. We will miss her terribly.

**Looking forward to cooler weather and much-needed rain, we wish you happy holidays!** Drs. Andy Liu, Dolly Shoup, Beverly Joyce, Tanya Spirtos, Virginia Chan, Anjie Li, nurse practitioners Lindsay Pettit, and Marjan Hafezi, and office manager Karen Palladino.