

Employer Toolkit

Thank you for your interest in the Washington Health Alliance's *Choosing Wisely*[®] campaign. These materials are for you to use as you see fit in your current employee communication efforts. They are written for a broad audience, but we invite you to customize each item for your own needs. The Alliance staff is available to help you implement this toolkit or provide additional materials that you may need. Please contact **John Gallagher** at (206) 454-2957 if you have questions.

How to use this information

Employers play an important role in improving the health outcomes of their employees, and the right communications make all the difference.

The Washington Health Alliance's *Choosing Wisely*[®] Employer Toolkit includes ready-to-use materials to distribute to your employees under your brand. Whether you're adding to a current campaign or creating a new one, you'll see that connecting these resources to your other initiatives is easy. Here are a few general thoughts on how to use this information.

Name-drop throughout existing communications. You don't need to change the channels you use to launch your own campaign with these materials. Just link to these resources from your website or mention them in regular publications. Integrate elements of the campaign with your existing wellness program.

Make a list of ongoing resources. Add our one-pagers and other materials to a list of ongoing resources you already have. Or, if you're looking to create one, this is a great place to start.

Promote your campaign. The toolkit has content to use online and in social media. Use tweets, videos, visuals, info sheets and more to remind employees why it's important to be engaged in their health.

Get some face time. Promote the Washington Health Alliance's *Choosing Wisely*[®] campaign in employee meetings or break rooms.

Here is sample language describing *Choosing Wisely* for your website:

New resources from *Choosing Wisely*, the Washington Health Alliance and the Washington State Medical Association can help you make great health care decisions throughout the year. The more educated you are, the more prepared you will be to ask questions of your physician, understand recommendations, and weigh the pros and cons of treatment options—all of which add up to living healthier and getting better care. Find out more at <http://oyh.wacommunitycheckup.org/choosingwisely/>.

Article series

These articles can be used to introduce employees to the Choosing Wisely initiative in newsletters, blogs or your intranet site.

LONG ARTICLES

More equals better? Not when it comes to your health

Help get employees engaged in the topic and understand the basics of health care, appropriate use of services and quality.

When most of us think of health care, we think of healing. But not all health care improves health.

Nearly half of primary care physicians say their own patients get too much medical care. And all that unnecessary care is not helping people live better or longer, according to [researchers](#) at Dartmouth College.

Receiving more treatment won't help

From state to state and county to county, there are tremendous differences in the way people with serious illnesses are treated. In some places, patients see more doctors, have more tests and spend two to three times more money on health care than in other parts of the country.

And patients who receive the most medical care don't necessarily live longer or enjoy a better quality of life than those who receive more conservative treatment. In fact, they often have more complications, spend more money and are less satisfied with their care.

Why does unnecessary care happen? Dartmouth researchers found multiple reasons: Doctors don't always have all the information they need on what constitutes the "right" amount of health care; most doctors are paid per test, visit or procedure; and many times, you, the patient, request it.

That combination creates challenges in the delivery of appropriate health care. But many groups are working together to reverse the course.

Many resources to help

A critical change needed in the health care system is to reduce the overuse of unnecessary tests and procedures. Choosing Wisely[®], an initiative led by the ABIM Foundation, is one of several efforts by patients, physicians and others involved in health care to improve communications, focus on the right treatments and get people healthier.

From understanding the recommended tests for your age and gender to complicated issues like knowing how to navigate the health care system, the resources developed by medical societies as part of Choosing Wisely can help you have better conversations with your physician. That can lead to better health for you.

Change happens when you know more about your care. So start today.

[Download this handy PDF](#) for information on common tests or procedures that may not be necessary.

To learn more about evidence-based recommendations on common conditions affecting Washington residents, visit www.wacommunitycheckup.org/ownyourhealth/choosingwisely/, and [download this wallet card](#) to help you in your conversations with your health care team.

Three health care treatments you may not need

Show employees how more care isn't necessarily better care with a real-life example.

A middle-aged IBM executive from the New York City area experienced chest pain and went to a cardiologist, who ordered a full workup, including a CT scan of his chest.

According to the [story in Consumer Reports](#), nothing was found, but a radiologist saw “something funny” in the neck area. A biopsy was performed, followed by an angiogram. The second procedure resulted in complications and a brief stay in the hospital. When it was over, he had amassed more than \$150,000 in bills.

Eventually, the pain disappeared on its own. Months later, a physician determined he had a strained chest muscle, which required no treatment other than over-the-counter medicine.

People across the United States are relying on medical tests they don't need. This unnecessary care can lead to harmful side effects and can cost thousands of dollars.

While saving money should never be a reason to avoid needed tests and procedures, you should know when a test or screening is appropriate and when a second opinion may be in order.

U.S. medical specialty societies, working with Consumer Reports and the ABIM Foundation, created a list of tests and treatments they say are performed too often and not always necessary. The effort, called Choosing Wisely[®], is part of a national initiative to help patients and physicians have conversations about what care they truly need.

Here are three treatments from that list:

ECGs and exercise stress tests

If you have sudden chest pain, an electrocardiogram (ECG) or exercise stress test can be lifesaving. If you have a history of heart disease or are at very high risk for it, these tests are also very important.

But if you don't, you should think twice.

Even though the tests are less accurate for lower-risk people and sometimes have misleading results, low-risk patients often get this test as part of their routine checkup.

The inaccurate results can trigger more and more tests, which can expose you to radiation over time. It can also be a waste of money. According to HealthcareBlueBook.com, an ECG typically costs about \$50 and an exercise stress test about \$200 to \$300.

[Download this PDF](#) to learn more about these tests and other cardiac imaging tests you may want to avoid.

Imaging tests for headaches

Many people who experience severe headaches want a CT scan or MRI to see if they're caused by a brain tumor or other serious problem. But most of the time, neither test is necessary.

Generally, your doctor only needs a careful medical history and a neurological exam, which typically tests such things as your reflexes, to diagnose migraines, tension-type headaches and other common headaches.

Adding a CT scan or MRI rarely shows why a headache occurs or helps you manage its symptoms. And they are unlikely to reveal a more serious underlying problem.

One possible risk is that they will show something that appears to be worrisome but actually isn't. For example, in some cases, doctors might mistake a more prominent area of a person's brain for a tumor, or a twist in a blood vessel for a brain aneurysm. Those findings can lead to more and more unnecessary tests.

[Download this PDF](#) to learn more about these tests for headaches and other conditions you may want to avoid studying with high-resolution imaging.

Treating sinusitis with antibiotics

Millions of people are prescribed antibiotics each year for sinusitis, a frequent complication of the common cold, hay fever and other respiratory allergies. Unfortunately, most of those people probably don't need the drugs.

Sinus infections almost always stem from a viral infection, not a bacterial one—and antibiotics don't work against viruses. Even when bacteria are responsible, the infections usually clear up on their own in a week or so. And antibiotics don't help ease allergies, either.

About one in four people who take antibiotics have side effects, including stomach problems, dizziness or rashes. Overuse of antibiotics also encourages the growth of bacteria that can't be controlled easily with drugs. That makes you more vulnerable to antibiotic-resistant infections.

Antibiotics are usually required only when symptoms last longer than a week, start to improve but then worsen again or are very severe.

[Download this PDF](#) to learn more about these tests for sinusitis and other conditions you may want to avoid studying with high-resolution imaging.

For more examples, visit <http://oyh.wacomunitycheckup.org/choosingwisely/>.

SHORT ARTICLES

Four things that would surprise you about health care

This article highlights several facts and insights from the Choosing Wisely[®] campaign to engage employees and point them to Washington Health Alliance resources.

Health care is anything but predictable. These four facts about your health and the care you receive may surprise you.

1. A long, caring and respectful relationship with your doctor is more beneficial to your health than you think.

Forming a long-term relationship with your primary care physician is the most important thing you can do for your health, according to a [Consumer Reports survey of 660 physicians](#).

But having that strong relationship isn't a guarantee. You'll need to invest some energy—and make sure you find a doctor who will do the same. Find out more about establishing a relationship with a primary care doctor in the article, "[How to Find the Primary Care Doctor for You](#)."

2. Getting more health care won't necessarily make you any healthier.

Nearly half of primary care physicians say their own patients get too much medical care, according to a survey published in 2011 by researchers at Dartmouth College. And all that care is not helping people live better or longer.

Researchers at Dartmouth found that "patients with serious conditions who are treated in regions that provide the most aggressive medical care—have the most tests and procedures, see the most specialists and spend the most days in hospitals—don't live longer or enjoy a better quality of life than those who receive more conservative treatment."

[Download a card](#) that highlights five common areas where residents of Washington sometimes get too much care.

3. One-third of all health care isn't necessary.

According to the Institute of Medicine, as much as 30 percent of health care in the U.S. is just not needed. There are several reasons why this happens. Doctors have little information on what constitutes the "right" amount of health care; most doctors are paid per test, visit or procedure; and, sometimes, the patient requests the care.

Every unnecessary test or procedure is doing two things: exposing you to harmful side effects and racking up your medical bills.

You can learn it's okay to [ask questions of your doctor](#) whenever a recommended test or procedure feels unwarranted.

Three reasons to take a notepad to your next doctor visit

This article includes doctor-patient relationship insights and links for more details.

For many people, going to the doctor is a mildly stressful experience at best. You may feel ill and have little energy to talk about what you need. Or maybe you're anticipating being rushed through an appointment, which puts you on edge.

Maybe simply stepping into the office induces an inexplicable fear.

Believe it or not, there are some simple things you can do to make your visit less stressful and more productive. Here are three reasons why you should take a notepad to your next office visit.

Your visit will be short

Sometimes you feel like your time with the doctor just isn't long enough.

That means you've got to be prepared for your appointment just as you would for a business meeting. It sounds simple and it is, but preparation is a powerful way to reduce anxiety and a great way to make the most of your appointment. So get your notepad, make a list of your concerns and think about how you want to talk to your doctor about them.

Notes are more reliable than your memory

Jot down notes so that you won't have to remember everything your doctor said. Write down the name of any new diagnosis, treatment option or medication, and check with your doctor to make sure you spelled it correctly. You should also record any tips given and read them aloud to your doctor for confirmation. And remember to ask your doctor to explain anything you don't understand.

You'll need to follow your treatment plan

The top complaint doctors have about their patients is that they aren't following advice or treatment recommendations. But compliance these days can be a lot more complicated than just remembering to take a pill. Notes from your doctor's visit can help you stay organized and allow you to do your best to follow your doctor's treatment plan.

Review the information you noted during your office visit, and if you can't remember or don't understand something, call the office to get the information you need.

Using something as simple as a notepad can change the relationship you have with your doctor and lead to better health results. The following resources provide additional tips and information you can use to strengthen the relationship between you and your doctor:

- [Tips on what to do during your appointment](#)
- [Download a personal medication tracker for your next appointment](#)

Getting the right preventive care

This article lists preventive practices to build healthy habits.

When you're young, it's easy to skip your annual checkup with the doctor. You feel great, so why bother? When you're older, you might make it to every routine visit. But you may also ask for a little more treatment than is necessary.

Getting the most out of preventive care is about knowing what tests and screenings are right for your age, gender and risk factors. And knowing what's right for you begins with your relationship with your doctor, who can help you become aware of what tests and screenings you might need.

Preventive care is essential

When it comes to treating potentially serious conditions, early diagnosis is key. Generally, the earlier you begin treatment for a condition, the greater your chance for a full recovery.

Even if you're in the best shape of your life, a serious condition with no signs or symptoms may be in your body. Simple routine screenings are among the only ways to detect the early warning signs. If a specific condition runs in your family, like colon cancer, it's even more important that you get the recommended screenings.

In most cases, preventive care screenings are covered at 100% by insurance, which means there is no cost to you when you receive these covered services—even more reason why you should get preventive care.

By taking an active role in your health with preventive care, you can achieve health and vitality. Remember, **your primary care doctor is your partner in health.**

Alliance/WSMA Choosing Wisely Resources

The Alliance and the Washington State Medical Association have created these materials to help your staff become more engaged in their health care by specifically focusing on tests and procedures often overused by the people of Washington. Please post or distribute to your entire employee population as you see fit.

- Five Questions to Ask Your Doctor [Wallet Card](#)
- Talk to Your Doctor About When You Need Tests — and When You Don't [Card](#)
- [Screening for Cervical Cancer – When You Need it and When You Don't](#)
- [Early Elective Deliveries – Why Scheduling Early Delivery is Not a Good Idea](#)
- [Antibiotics – When You Need Them and When You Don't](#)
- [Cardiac Imaging – When You Need it and When You Don't](#)
- [Other Imaging – When You Need it and When You Don't](#)
- [WSMA Physician Toolkit](#)

Video Series

Use these short videos to familiarize employees with Choosing Wisely. The videos are available online and can be downloaded.

Choosing Wisely[®]: what it is and what resources are available

Introduce the campaign to employees with a fun visual aid. This video also lists the resources that are available through Consumer Reports. Find the video online at: <http://consumerhealthchoices.org/for-employees/>.

All About Choosing Wisely: an overview of the program and its goals

http://youtu.be/ZPWTPXvnC_w?list=PL71AB65CF44225B52

Information on treating sinusitis

Millions of people take antibiotics to treat sinusitis. For most, there are better ways to relieve sinus congestion and pain.

<http://youtu.be/qcYPcB3D314?list=PL71AB65CF44225B52>

About EKGs and stress tests

If you have heart disease or are at risk for it, an EKG or exercise stress test can be lifesaving. But in other cases, the tests are usually not a good idea.

<http://youtu.be/yqA2L6kLLmg?list=PL71AB65CF44225B52>

Support your campaign with social media

If you're using social media, here are some ready-to-use micro-blog content and Tweets:



It's okay to ask questions of your doctor! Get a few here. <http://goo.gl/dE9Gdn>
#ChoosingWisely



Why you should take a notepad to your next doctor visit. <http://goo.gl/7dz8mp> #Choosing Wisely



When should that headache be treated with more than acetaminophen?
<http://goo.gl/ya8byX> #ChoosingWisely

Consumer Reports' No-Commercial-Use Policy

Consumer Reports' No-Commercial-Use Policy: ensuring fair, objective, independent reviews

Why it matters

At Consumer Reports, we believe that objective, impartial testing, reviews and Ratings are critically important for consumers. That is why we have a strict “**No-Commercial-Use Policy**” preventing the use of our name and information for any promotional or advertising purposes. The policy helps ensure we avoid even the appearance of endorsing a particular product or service for financial gain. The policy also guarantees that consumers have access to the full context of our information and are not hearing about our findings through the language of salesmanship.

Why it's important

For consumers, our No-Commercial-Use Policy provides peace of mind that the information they are receiving is free of influence, bias or commercial interference.

For manufacturers, service providers and other retailers, adhering to the policy bolsters their own reputation for honesty and integrity. Our more than eight million subscribers to our information products and services recognize and support our organization because it allows them to make their own purchasing decisions based upon expert, independent, unbiased reviews and recommendations.

Encouraging support for the policy

We take all appropriate steps to prevent promotional and advertising use of our materials, our name or our content. We carefully monitor the use of our trademarks, as well as copyrighted material such as articles, ratings and reviews, in order to preserve our reputation as a source of information not influenced by, or associated with, commercial interests.

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What you can do: Report a violation!

Our subscribers take this policy as seriously as we do, and we most often learn of violations through our readers. Many of the more than eight million subscribers to Consumer Reports' information products and services are vigilant in reporting violations of our No-Commercial-Use Policy. Subscribers can become understandably upset at any commercial activity that threatens to damage Consumer Reports' most precious asset—our reputation for integrity, objectivity and lack of bias.

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We review every reported violation. At Consumer Reports, we are committed to ensuring our No-Commercial-Use Policy continues to serve consumers.

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We also accept no advertising. Our income is derived from the sale of *Consumer Reports*[®], ConsumerReports.org[®], and our other publications and information products, services, fees, and noncommercial contributions and grants.

Read the policy

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