

## Understanding “Grades of Recommendations” for Preventive Health Care

### “Grades of Recommendations”

The Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care ([www.ctfphc.org](http://www.ctfphc.org)), and the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force ([www.ahcpr.gov/clinic/uspstfix.htm](http://www.ahcpr.gov/clinic/uspstfix.htm)) have established “grades” for preventive actions that your doctor might recommend.

These grades indicate whether the amount and quality of scientific research shows that certain preventive actions do more good than harm.

<b>Grades A and B:</b>	The research shows that the preventive action <b>should</b> be recommended. This grade includes actions like checking blood pressure, doing a Pap smear, providing immunizations.
<b>Grade C:</b> (Conflicting)	The findings of some good research studies <b>disagree</b> with those of other good studies, so your doctor is unable to clearly recommend a preventive action one way or the other. However, your doctor might recommend such a preventive action based on something other than research, such as whether or not you have a particular medical condition.
<b>Grades D and E:</b>	The research shows that the preventive action should <b>not</b> be recommended. For many patients, this would include actions like routine urine tests or chest x-rays.
<b>Grade I:</b> (Insufficient)	There are <b>not enough</b> and/or <b>not good enough</b> research studies completed, so your doctor would only recommend this preventive action for other reasons.

These recommendation grades sometimes change because important new research is completed, so your doctor’s advice about a particular issue may change too.

### Your Part in Preventive Health Care

Preventive health care involves you and your doctor working together, and it helps both of you.

Sometimes doing more things on a physical examination or ordering more screening tests actually can be more harmful than helpful. This is why these national organizations have been established—to carefully evaluate preventive actions.

These are some ways you can participate in prevention:

- Your doctor may ask you to complete a preventive health questionnaire before your “check-up”. Please complete it as thoroughly as you can, even if some of the questions seem unusual.
- If your doctor makes a suggestion about using a particular preventive action, and there isn’t enough time to discuss it at that particular visit, ask for something to read or come back to see him/her for follow-up.
- When your doctor does **not** suggest a particular examination or screening test that you were expecting, it’s always appropriate to ask questions. Perhaps it is a preventive action that has received a D or E grade!
- Keep your doctor advised of all medications, both prescription and non-prescription (e.g. cold or allergy products, pain relievers, herbal products, vitamins and supplements), that you are taking.
- Check out the displays of brochures and pamphlets in your doctor’s office to see if any of them apply to you and your family.

