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**LIVING**  
WELL DC

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# HEALTH JOURNAL





**DC Health Vision:** To be the healthiest city in America

**DC Health Mission:** The District of Columbia Department of Health promotes health, wellness and equity across the District, and protects the safety of residents, visitors and those doing business in our nation's capital.

## LIVING WELL DC

**Living Well DC** is a DC Health project that works collaboratively with health providers and community-based organizations to build health literacy and capacity throughout DC. Our mission is to improve the health outcomes of all DC residents and support the organizations and health professionals that are helping achieve this.

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## ABOUT THE HEALTH JOURNAL

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The health of DC residents is important. Good health improves your happiness and well-being, it contributes to prosperity and wealth and even economic progress, as healthy populations are more productive, save more and live longer. We want you to be healthy, we want you to understand your health so you and your loved ones can have a better quality of life.

DC Health has created and designed this journal for DC residents as a tool to improve health outcomes and help you when it comes to understanding your personal health. This journal has information that can help you and serves as a place to keep your important notes and records.

You Can Prevent & Manage Chronic Disease _____	3
Yearly Check-Ups & Doctor's Visits _____	4
After your Doctor Visit _____	12
Understand health insurance _____	17
Stop Health Problems _____	20
District Government Services _____	23

## Stay Healthy

You have control over your health. Healthy living raises the chances you'll be there for your family and friends for many years to come.

Use your health plan when you are sick and when you are well, to help you live

a long, healthy life. While using your health plan is important, there's no substitute for living a healthy life.



Here's what you can do to put your health and well-being first:

- Take an active role in your health.
- Don't smoke.
- Get the routine care that is right for you.
- Learn more about what you can do to stay healthy and share what you learn with your family and friends.
- Make time for staying active, healthy eating, and rest.

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## YOU CAN PREVENT & MANAGE CHRONIC DISEASE

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Many chronic diseases are caused by key risk behaviors. Chronic diseases are defined broadly as conditions that last 1 year or more and require ongoing medical attention or limit activities of daily living or both. Chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes are the leading causes of death and disability in the United States. They are also leading drivers of the nation's \$3.8 trillion in annual health care costs.

Many chronic diseases are caused by a short list of risk behaviors:

- Tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke
- Poor nutrition, including diets low in fruits and vegetables and high in sodium and saturated fats
- Physical Inactivity
- Excessive alcohol use

By making healthy choices, you can reduce your likelihood of getting a chronic disease and improve your quality of life.









## Building a partnership with your physician & healthcare team

A good bond with your doctor takes being honest and clear. Ask the right questions about your health to get info you need about concerns you have. Asking the right questions lowers the risk of errors from occurring and leads to better health.



**PHYSICIAN:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**HEALTH CENTER:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**DATE OF VISIT:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## During Your Visit

- It's ok to tape-record your visit, take notes or bring a friend or family member with you
- Keep your talk focused to make sure to cover your main questions and concerns. These are any issues you may have and how they impact your life
- Ask your doctor to clear up anything you don't understand
- Let your doctor know if you are seeing other doctors
- Share info about any recent health tests your doctor may not know about

## Questions to ask about a health issue.

- What is my health condition?
- What has caused my health issue?
- Can my health issue be treated?
- How will this health issue change my health?
- What should I expect?
- Should I make any life changes?
- What is the care for my health issue?
  - How good has this care been with others?
  - Are there any risks tied to this care?
  - What can I gain from this care?
  - When will care start, and how long will it last?



**10** LIVING WELL DC

- Are there limits to this care that have to do with food or things I like to do?
- Are there other choices I can pick from?
- Will my care involve any drugs and if so, what should I do if I miss a dose?

**Questions to ask about medicine.**

- How long will I need to take this medication?
- How will this medicine help me?
- Are there any side effects?
- Do I have to take this medicine with food?
- Have others used this medication?
- Will this medication interact with other medicines I take?
- What should I do if I have a bad reaction to this medicine?
- What will happen if I miss a dose?

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## AFTER YOUR DOCTOR VISIT

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### Medication Instructions

**Reading your meds.** There are certain pieces of info that your doctor will always have on meds. The doctor's info, such as their name, address, and phone number, will be on the bottle. In the upper section of the meds sheet, there will be a place for your name, your age or birth date, your address, and the date your meds are given to you. Below this, your doctor will write drug info.



- The medicine given to you by your doctor will tell you how much to take and how to take it.
- Info for the people who work at the pharmacy is on the bottle and it tells the person at the pharmacy how much of the medicine to give you when you will need to fill it the first time and how many times you can refill it.
- Your doctor will also sign and date the bottom of the form to prove that it was prescribed by a doctor.
- Written orders from a doctor for a controlled substance, one that the federal government has decided can cause “abuse or dependence,” such as morphine or methadone, will have added rules. The form will say how many times you can fill the medicine and if you can have refills. It must be done by hand and must be signed by the prescribing doctor.
- Many doctors now send meds electronically to the drugstore of your choice to make it easier for you.

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## What is Diagnostic Testing?

### Lab Tests & Diagnostic Methods

Lab tests and preventative services are used to check if a person's health is normal. A lab can test some of your blood, urine, or a group of your cells to see if something is wrong.

A diagnostic test or procedure can also show if you have something wrong, like blood pressure testing can show if you have low or high blood pressure.



The tests use a range because what is normal differs from person to person. Many things can change your test results. These include:

- Your sex, age and race
- What you eat and drink
- Drugs you take
- How well you followed doctor's orders

Your doctor may also compare your results from earlier tests.

Laboratory tests are often part of yearly checkups to look for changes in your health. They help doctors diagnose medical conditions, plan your treatments, and keep track of your conditions as they change over time.

Questions to ask about tests

- What kind of tests will I have?
- What do you expect to find out from these tests?
- When will you know the results?
- Will I need more tests?



## Giving informed consent for a health care service

You have the right to decide what type of health care you want to get. By law, your doctors must make your health issues clear and provide you with health care choices.

Informed consent means:

- You are informed. You have received info about your health issue and care choices.
- You know your health issue and care choices.
- You can decide what health care treatment you want to get and give your okay to get it.

To get your informed consent, your doctor may talk with you about the care. Then you will read a description of it and sign a form. This is written informed consent.

Or your doctor may make clear a treatment to you and then ask if you agree to have the treatment. Not all health treatments need written informed consent.

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## UNDERSTAND HEALTH INSURANCE

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Health insurance plans help protect you from high health care costs. It is a contract between you and your health plan company. You buy a plan or policy, and the company agrees to pay part of your costs when you need health care.



Many people in the U.S. get a health plan policy through their employers. In most cases, the employer helps pay for that health plan. Health plans through employers are often with a managed care plan. These plans hire health care providers and health care offices to give care for members at reduced costs. You can also buy health plans on your own either through a private health insurance company or through the District of Columbia's health insurance marketplace.

People who meet certain needs can get a government health plan, such as Medicare and Medicaid. The Affordable Care Act makes health plans more affordable for many people in the U.S.

### What a health plan covers/not covered

Your health plan company may ask you to pay for some of the care you get. This is often called cost sharing because you share or pay some of the costs, and your health plan company pays the rest. There are many types of costs that you could pay. These are:

**Copayment:** Sometimes this is called a “copay.” This is most often a set amount you pay for a visit, test, or meds. Copays are often lower for family doctors than specialists.

**Deductible:** This is the amount of money you need to pay each year before the health plan group will cover all the left-over costs. It is often called “meeting your deductible.” If you are healthy and don’t use healthcare often, having a high deductible and low monthly cost for a health plan may make sense. But, if you become sick, then your costs may be higher.

**Coinsurance:** After you have met your deductible for the year, some insurance companies still require coinsurance. This is the percent of the cost that you will still pay for some services.

All this may not be clear. It is vital to know what the scope of your health plan offers before you sign. Call your health plan company if you don’t know or speak with your doctor for answers to your questions.

**CURRENT INSURANCE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**INSURANCE #:** \_\_\_\_\_

**GROUP ID:** \_\_\_\_\_

**IS THE INSURANCE THROUGH WORK OR THROUGH A RELATIVE?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**WHAT IS YOUR DEDUCTIBLE?** \_\_\_\_\_

**WHAT IS YOUR COPAY?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**NOTES:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Eligibility for public insurance/Assistance Programs

Medicare is the federal health plan program for:

- People who are 65 or older
- Certain younger people with handicaps
- People with End-Stage Renal Disease (permanent kidney failure needing dialysis or a transplant, sometimes called ESRD)

The program helps with the cost of health care, but it does not cover all health costs or the cost of most long-term care. You have choices for how you get Medicare coverage. If you choose to have Original Medicare (Part A and Part B) coverage, you can buy a Medicare Supplement Insurance (Medigap) policy from a private health plan group.

### **Medicaid**

Medicaid gives health plans to millions of Americans, such as eligible low-income adults, children, pregnant women, older adults and people with handicaps. Medicaid is run by states, as stated by federal rules. The program is funded jointly by states and the federal government.

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## STOP HEALTH PROBLEMS

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Stopping Health Problems – Why is early and routine health care of great value?

Routine healthcare includes screenings, health exams, and working with your doctor and healthcare team that are used to prevent and address sickness, disease, and other health problems. These tools help spot signs of poor health at an early stage when care is likely to work best. Getting early routine care and making healthy life choices are key steps to good health and well-being.



Having a doctor who knows your health needs, and whom you trust and can work with, can help you:

- Make sure you get early and routine care that's right for you
- Make healthy life choices
- Help your mental well-being
- Reach your health goals to be well.

### Pointing out Signs & Warnings

Get better at finding signs that can warn you of disease, for example paying attention to how your body reacts to drugs and other health changes. Finding signs of disease early can help you make life adjustments before the disease worsens, which can lead to a healthier life. It is also important to find care that can help you know you have the disease and manage

your disease before it gets worse. This can help you save money because routine care is covered by your health plan.

Your doctor can make routine health screenings to look for early signs of certain health issues. Early action and care can make a big impact in the results of health tests.

**CURRENT MEDS:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**HEALTH ISSUES:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**CONCERNS:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**SYMPTOMS:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## DISTRICT GOVERNMENT SERVICES

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### **Access Helpline**

The Access Helpline at 1(888)7WE-HELP or 1-888-793-4357 is the easiest way to get connected to services provided by the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) and its certified behavioral health care providers. This 24-hour, seven-day-a-week telephone line is staffed by behavioral health professionals who can refer a caller to immediate help or ongoing care. The Access Helpline can activate mobile crisis teams to respond to adults and children who are experiencing a psychiatric or emotional crisis and are unable or unwilling to travel to receive behavioral health services.

### **DC Health Link**

DC Health Link offers health insurance from 3 UnitedHealth Companies, 2 Aetna Companies, CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield, and Kaiser. Approximately 100,000 people have private health insurance through DC Health Link and this includes more than 5,000 District small businesses, approximately 11,000 designated Congressional staff and Members of Congress, and thousands of District residents. To enroll or learn more visit [dchealthlink.com](https://dchealthlink.com).

### **DC Healthcare Alliance**

The DC Healthcare Alliance (“the Alliance”) is a health coverage program that is offered to individuals and families who are not eligible for Medicaid. The Alliance is a locally funded program that includes a range of health care services to include primary care services, doctor visits, prescription drugs, dental services and wellness programs. To be eligible for the Alliance, you must be a resident of the District of Columbia, have no other health insurance, including Medicaid and Medicare and meet a certain income threshold. Learn if you qualify by visiting [dhcf.dc.gov/service/health-care-alliance](https://dhcf.dc.gov/service/health-care-alliance).

### **DC Healthy Families**

DC Healthy Families is a program that provides free health insurance to DC residents who meet certain income and U.S. citizenship or eligible immigration status to qualify for DC Medicaid. The DC Healthy Families program covers doctor visits, vision and dental care, prescription drugs, hospital stays, and transportation for appointments. DC Healthy Families also offers special programs for newborn babies, children with disabilities or special health care needs, and people with HIV and AIDS. Learn if you qualify by visiting [dhcf.dc.gov/node/892092](https://dhcf.dc.gov/node/892092).

### **GetCheckedDC**

GetCheckedDC is the District's free program that provides residents with confidential, convenient testing for both HIV and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Learn more at [getcheckeddc.org](https://getcheckeddc.org) or (202) 741-7692.

### **The Immigrant Children's Program**

The Immigrant Children's Program (ICP) is a health coverage program that is offered to children under age 21 who are not eligible for Medicaid due to citizenship or immigration status. The ICP includes a range of health care services to include primary care services, doctor visits, prescription drugs, dental services, and wellness programs. To be eligible for the ICP, you must be a resident of the District of Columbia, have no other health insurance, including Medicaid and Medicare and meet a certain income threshold. Services covered under the Immigrant Children Program are very similar to the services covered under Medicaid for children under age twenty-one (21). Learn if you qualify by visiting [dhcf.dc.gov/service/immigrant-childrens-program](https://dhcf.dc.gov/service/immigrant-childrens-program).

**LinkUDMV.org**

[LinkUDMV.org](#) is an online directory to help people find a full range of services offered by medical and community providers, including health, sexual health, food/nutrition, housing, transportation, financial assistance, education, and employment in the Metropolitan area.

**MyRecovery\DC**

MyRecovery\DC features the stories of men and women who have faced addiction. Their stories highlight their treatment and recovery journeys. Visit [myrecoverydc.org](#) to gain access to Certified Peer Specialist and services.

**Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) Hotline**

The District's Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) Hotline is a resource for people who may have been exposed to HIV. PEP is emergency medication taken to prevent HIV and has to be started within 72 hours of a possible exposure. The DC PEP Hotline is open 24 hours a day/7 days a week, and can be reached by calling (202) 299-3PEP (3737). Learn more at [GetPEPDC.org](#)

**Support Services****Department of Aging and Community Living (DACL)**

DACL serves District residents 60 and older, adults living with disabilities, and those who care for them. To learn more about Senior Wellness Centers, transportation, and nutrition services, visit [dacl.dc.gov](#) or call (202) 724-5626.

## Healthcare Education Resources

Information on the topics below and others can be accessed by visiting [dchealth.dc.gov/page/community-health-administration](https://dchealth.dc.gov/page/community-health-administration) or calling (202) 442-5925.

- Health and Sexuality Education
- Violence Prevention and Education
- Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative
- Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs Initiative

## Help Me Grow DC (HMG DC)

HMG DC is for pregnant moms and families with children living in DC ages 0–5 years old. The program offers mothers and expectant mothers a place to learn about and identify developmental and/or behavioral concerns and then be connected to community-based developmental and behavioral services and supports. If you are concerned about a child’s development or are an expecting mother visit [dchealth.dc.gov/service/help-me-grow-dc](https://dchealth.dc.gov/service/help-me-grow-dc) or contact 1-800-MOM-BABY (1-800-666-2229) to speak with a care coordinator.

## Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

WIC offers DC residents who are either pregnant or have a child 5 or younger free healthy food and nutrition education, immunization assessment and screening, breastfeeding resources and support referrals for additional care. For more information visit [dchealth.dc.gov/service/special-supplemental-nutrition-program-women-infants-and-children-wic](https://dchealth.dc.gov/service/special-supplemental-nutrition-program-women-infants-and-children-wic) or contact (202) 442-5925.

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed)**

SNAP-Ed offers free nutrition and obesity prevention program for youth and adults. For more information, visit [dchealth.dc.gov/service/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-education](https://dchealth.dc.gov/service/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-education) or contact (202) 442-5925.

**Wellness Services****Cancer prevention, testing and referral services**

To learn more about the kinds of cancer and the resources available to residents, please visit [dchealth.dc.gov/service/cancer](https://dchealth.dc.gov/service/cancer) or contact (202) 442-9170.

**COVID-19**

Visit [coronavirus.dc.gov](https://coronavirus.dc.gov) to find more information on COVID-19.

**HIV prevention and care services including the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP), free condoms, educational resources, and more**

- To learn more about HIV and the services DC Health offers please visit [dchealth.dc.gov/service/hiv aids](https://dchealth.dc.gov/service/hiv aids) and enter your zip code to find services near you.
- To find out more or enroll in the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) please visit [dchealth.dc.gov/DC-ADAP](https://dchealth.dc.gov/DC-ADAP) or contact (202) 671-4815.
- For free condoms visit [dchealth.dc.gov/service/condoms-and-condom-information](https://dchealth.dc.gov/service/condoms-and-condom-information).

### **Non-COVID related immunization services and assistance for children and adults**

Please visit [dchealth.dc.gov/service/immunization](https://dchealth.dc.gov/service/immunization) or contact (202) 576-7130.

### **STI(D)/HIV/Tuberculosis, Pregnancy or Hepatitis tests**

To make an appointment at the DC Health and Wellness Center at 77 P Street NE, visit [sexualbeing.org/dc-health-and-wellness-center](https://sexualbeing.org/dc-health-and-wellness-center) or call (202) 741-7692.

### **DC Quitline**

The DC Quitline (1-800-QUIT-NOW) helps District of Columbia residents quit smoking and enjoy life tobacco-free. The DC Quitline provides counseling support in several languages, including a local number (202-333-4488) directly connecting Spanish-speaking callers to Quit Coaches. The Quitline offers one-on-one support sessions with certified quit coaches by phone as well as support through text messages, web-based tools, and a quit guide. DC residents can also access up to 8 weeks of nicotine replacement patches or lozenges.

### **Vital Records**

#### **Birth or Death Certificates and Domestic Partnership Certificates**

Walk-up services are available at  
2201 Shannon Place SE, Washington, DC 20020

Monday and Tuesday: 9:00am–1:00pm

Wednesday: 9:00am–3:30pm

Thursday and Friday: 9:00am–1:00pm

Making an appointment is highly recommended, accomplished by visiting [dchealth.dc.gov/vital-records](https://dchealth.dc.gov/vital-records).

Service wait times can be found at [dcvsims.com/public/waittimes](https://dcvsims.com/public/waittimes).

You can also Contact Vital Records at (202) 442-9303.

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Scan the QR code to access the Health journal  
online and in other languages.



2201 Shannon Place SE, Washington, DC 20020

Phone: (202) 442-5955 | [livingwell.dc.gov](http://livingwell.dc.gov)