

AARP offers free health screenings and health education

Written by A. Barry Rand NNPA Special Commentary
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Congress is engaged in an enormously important national debate on health care. But we all know our health is also shaped in discussions closer to home—around our kitchen tables and in our communities. So while AARP is working with the President and Congress to make sure all Americans have affordable, quality health care, we're also working to make sure every person has the resources and the information to take care of his or her health.

AARP is working on a one-on-one basis to improve health through free health screenings and health education.

We've joined with Walgreens on a two-year Wellness Tour during which nine customized, traveling education and health-screening buses will visit 48 states, stopping in more than 3,000 communities with special emphasis on diverse and underserved areas.

Free health screenings, valued at over \$140, are being offered, including: cholesterol - to raise awareness of high blood cholesterol as a risk factor for heart disease; blood pressure; bone density, which relates to the risk of fractures; glucose levels, which can screen for diabetes and pre-diabetes; and obesity.

You don't need an appointment or health insurance. And you don't have to be an AARP member. In fact, by participating, you receive a free one-year AARP membership. If you're already an AARP member you receive a one-year membership extension.

In light of the terrible disparities in health care and health outcomes, these free screenings are even more important. Because many diseases can be detected long before symptoms arise, early detection is the key to staying healthy. However, African Americans are less likely to have health insurance and more likely to have chronic illness than the overall US population.

To find out where the AARP/Walgreens Wellness Tour is traveling, visit www.aarpwalgreens.com/tour or call

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1-866-484-TOUR.

We're emphasizing prevention, and we're working to help people afford the prescription drugs they need to manage chronic diseases and address other health conditions. The sharp rise in the cost of prescription drugs makes it very difficult for people with limited incomes to do what is best for their health. AARP is working to close the Medicare Part D "doughnut hole," the gap where people in Medicare have to pay for all of their prescription drugs.

We're also helping on a more personal level through our new Doughnut Hole calculator, where you can see if there are less expensive drugs available that would save money for you or a family member in the Medicare program.

With the calculator, you put in information about the drugs that you or a family member takes and the zip code.

You get a list of similar drugs that are more affordable, such as generic versions just as safe and effective as the brand-name drug. The calculator shows how the savings from switching to the less expensive drug would prevent or delay falling into the Medicare Part D doughnut hole. It enables you to print a letter to take to your doctor showing how much you would save by taking the lower-cost drug.

To use the doughnut hole calculator, go to <http://www.aarp.org/doughnuthole>

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