CHRISTUS Health Plan

Health Matters

Member newsletter

WINTER 2026

In this edition

Topic 1
Cervical cancer screening: Prevention starts with you

Topic 2
Colorectal cancer screening: Get checked

Topic 3
Take control of high blood pressure

MC8522

Cervical cancer screening: Prevention starts with you

Cervical cancer screening is one of the most powerful steps you can take for your health. Regular screening can find cell changes *before* they become cancer. And when cancer is found early, treatment is often more effective.

There are two types of screening tests. A Pap test checks cells from the cervix. An HPV test checks for the virus that can cause cervical cancer. The right test for you will depend on your age, health history, and past results. Screening usually starts at age 21. Ask your provider, "Do I need a Pap test or an HPV test and when should I schedule it?"

If a result comes back abnormal, try not to panic. An abnormal test result does not always mean cancer. Follow your provider's instructions for more tests or care. Call your provider if you notice any of these signs; bleeding that is not normal for you, unusual fluid or discharge from the vagina, pain during sex or pain in your lower belly that does not go away. These signs may have other causes, but they should be checked.

What to do:

- Keep your healthcare appointments and ask about cervical cancer screening at your next visit.
- Ask your provider whether the HPV vaccine is right for you. Even if you received the vaccine, you may still need regular screening.
- Do not use tobacco.

Colorectal cancer screening: Get checked

Colorectal cancer is one of the most preventable cancers, if you get checked regularly. Regular screenings can find growths (called polyps) before they become cancer. And when cancer is caught early, treatment can be more effective.

Most adults should start screening at age 45, even if you feel well. Colorectal cancer often causes no symptoms in its early stages, so do not wait for something to feel wrong.

There are several options available. Some screening tests, like stool tests, can be done at home. A colonoscopy is another approach that your provider may recommend. The best choice for you depends on your age, health history, family history, and past test results. Ask your provider, "Which colorectal cancer test is right for me and how often do I need it?"

An abnormal result does not always mean cancer. If a stool test or other screening tests comes back abnormal, try not to panic. An abnormal result does not always mean cancer. It does mean you will need a colonoscopy to complete the screening process. Follow your provider's instructions for more tests or care.

Call your provider if you have any of the following signs or symptoms: blood in or on your stool, a lasting change in your bowel habits, belly pain or cramps that do not go away, or weight loss you cannot explain. These signs may have other causes, but they should be checked.

What to do:

- Ages 45 - 75: Talk to your provider about colorectal cancer screening and get your test scheduled. Be sure to keep that appointment.
- Ages 76 - 85: Ask your provider if screening is right for you.
- You may need to start before age 45, or be screened more often, if you have certain health conditions or if you or a family member has had colorectal cancer or polyps. Mention your family history at your next visit.
- Complete all follow-up tests that your doctor recommends.
- Do not use tobacco.

Take control of high blood pressure

High blood pressure is known as a “silent” condition for a good reason. Most people feel fine even when their blood pressure is too high. There are no warning signs. The only way to know your blood pressure is to check it. If it stays too high over time, it can quietly damage your heart, brain, and kidneys.

The good news is that high blood pressure is manageable and the steps you take today can make a real difference. No single change will do everything, but lifestyle habits working together can help bring blood pressure down.

What to do:

- Eat more fruits and vegetables and choose foods with less salt.
- Move your body each day. Walk, bike, swim, or any activity you enjoy.
- Do not use tobacco.
- Get enough sleep.

Take one step at a time. Small, consistent changes add up to big results.

If you have been prescribed blood pressure medicine: Take it exactly as your provider tells you. Keep taking it, even when you feel well. Blood pressure medicine works best when taken consistently. Do not stop it or change your dose without talking to your provider first, even if your numbers improve.

Track your numbers at home: Home monitoring is one of the most powerful tools you have. Use an automatic monitor with a cuff that fits around your upper arm. Ask your provider or pharmacist if you need help choosing one. Write down your readings each time, and bring your log and your monitor to your healthcare visits so your provider can see the full picture.

High blood pressure warning

If the top number is higher than 180 or the bottom number is higher than 120:

1. Wait at least 1 minute and check again.
2. If the number is still that high and you have no other symptoms, call your provider as soon as possible.
3. Call 911 immediately if you also have any of the following:
   - chest pain or trouble breathing
   - back pain, weakness, or numbness
   - vision changes or trouble speaking
   - any other new or concerning symptoms

Ask your provider how often you should check your blood pressure and what your personal target number should be.

Know your numbers. Follow your care plan. Small steps can help protect your health.

Need help finding care? Call Member Services at 844.282.3035 (TTY 711).

Protect your heart health

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for adults, but there is a lot you can do to lower your risk. Conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, and tobacco use can damage your heart and blood vessels over time. The good news is that small, healthy choices can make a big difference. Eat a heart-healthy diet with plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins. Stay active, maintain a healthy weight, and avoid tobacco products. Take your medications as prescribed and keep regular appointments with your healthcare providers. It is important to know the warning signs of a heart attack, including chest discomfort, pain in the arms, back, neck, jaw, or stomach, shortness of breath, nausea, lightheadedness, or cold sweats. If you think you may be having a heart attack, call 911 right away. Early treatment can save your life and help prevent permanent damage to your heart.

Need to find a provider?

Visit **CHRISTUShealthplan.org/find-a-provider** or call Member Services at 844.282.3025 (TTY 711) for help in finding a provider or for a provider directory to be mailed to you within 5 business days at no cost. Call us from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., local time, Monday through Friday for assistance.

Get help from Care Management

Our Care Management program can help you plan and manage care for complex, chronic health issues as well as acute, episodic or short-term needs. The goal is to provide quality care, enhance quality of life and manage healthcare costs.

What types of services does the Care Management team provide?

- Condition management
- Medicine support
- Coordination of appointments
- Healthcare provider support
- Self-management goal planning
- A Care Management referral can come from a provider, member, caregiver or discharge planner

Care Management is provided at **no cost**. Call 800.446.1730, option 2, from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. (CST) to speak to a care manager nurse.

A 24-hour nurse line is also available at 844.581.3175.

CHRISTUShealthplan.org

Looking for the latest newsletter?

You can now find it in your Member Portal. If you haven't set up your account yet, click here to register.

We want to hear from you

Tell us what topics you'd like to see in upcoming newsletters. Click here to take our quick survey.

Contact us

For any questions, contact member services at **844.282.3025.**

FRAUD, WASTE OR ABUSE?

Report potential fraud, waste or abuse in the CHRISTUS Health Plan network by submitting details to the Special Investigations Unit via email, secure fax or phone.

FWA HOTLINE: 855.771.8072

EMAIL: fraudreporting@christushealth.org

SECURE FAX: 210.766.8849

If you prefer anonymity, call the Integrity Line at 888.728.8383 or visit **CHRISTUSintegritylink.org**.

For compliance questions or concerns, you can email us at chpcompliance@christushealth.org

26-2012150