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The Importance of Being Tested

We're constantly being bombarded with recommendations to get multiply medical tests completed. And while a handful of conventional screening tests are valuable and do save lives, others are widely overused and unreliable – and some are down right harmful.

The following are suggestions from Dr. Weston at their center in Carney's Point , New Jersey. Don't skip these medical tests – they could save your life!

In my practice , I've seen a lot of screening and diagnostic tests come and go. But these are the ones I strongly believe in, and recommend to my patients at Weston Wellness Center.

The following are my recommendations:

An Annual Blood Workup: A simple blood test can reveal a tremendous amount about your heart and diabetes risk, Immune and Liver functions, and more. I recommend getting a complete blood workup annually which include a Full Lipid Profile, Basic /Complete Metabolic Panel/ Profile and a TSH, T-4 FREE, T-3 testing which are required in our center when you come in for your 1st Consultation Visit.

Regular Blood Pressure Checks: According to the American Heart Association, as many as 72 Million Americans have high blood pressure, 28% of them are unaware of it, and a large percentage of those who have been diagnosed have poor blood pressure control. I recommend everyone over 34 yrs. Old have their blood pressure checked regularly.

Non- invasive Tests OF Heart Function: Because heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, it is important to evaluate the health of your cardiovascular system. While blood tests can help, sometimes we need more direct information about the heart. The best, least invasive methods Of getting this information are the Exercise Stress Test and a Echo Cardiogram.

Bone Density: Although , I don't recommend bone mineral density screening for everybody, I think this test is important for post- menopausal women who are at

greatest risk of osteoporosis. The best most reliable way to determine bone density is with Dual Energy X-Ray Absorptionmetry(DEXA) Scan. This test is quick ,painless , non- invasive, and quite safe – although it does expose you to a small amount of radiation.

Proven Cancer Screening Testing: I'm not a fan of some of the most popular cancer screening tests. However, there are three tests that I do support. They include the **PAP Smear** (a screening test for cancer of the cervix), **Colorectal (CEA)** cancer screening and finally a test procedure for cancer that most people have not heard of; the **AMAS** test (a antimalignin antibody in serum test). It can identify cancers before they are visible on film or scans.

These tests often “scarce the socks off of people” --- leading to unnecessary procedures and surgery.

Now lets move onto four very common tests that may not live up to their promise of saving lives. Instead, they scarce people, funneling them into unnecessary tests and surgical procedures. If you are recommended to have these screenings done, I urge you to get all the facts – and tread cautiously.

Mammograms: Not All They're Cracked Up to Be .

Mammography is supposed to save lives by detecting breast cancer early. But while it's true that some studies have shown mammography can reduce the number of deaths from breast cancer for 50 – 69 year old women, there is little evidence to support its use in women under the age of 50 years old or over the age of 70 years old. False readings are common in this testing. Plus, you are exposed over and over to radiation. There is another intelligent option to explore into called “**Thermography**”.

The Pitfalls of PSA Testing: Prostate cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in men – and its skyrocketing in older men. That's why I recommend that men ages 35 and older get a prostate specific antigen(**PSA**) test which measures a blood component that rises in the presence of prostate cancer. **The problem however, is that PSA can also rise with some non-cancerous** conditions, such as prostatitis (inflammation of the prostate).In fact, it is estimated that half of all PSA results are false positives and false negatives occur too.

So what should we do?

Beginning around age 35 you should get an annual digital rectal examination. If a tumor can be felt in the prostate, further investigation is indicated. If you like to have annual PSA tests to monitor PSA velocity, fine.

But do not jump into treatments solely based on your PSA reading, it may not be accurate.

Angiography: Gateway to invasive procedures.

Angiography, or also known as Coronary Catheterization, involves injecting dye into a coronary artery, followed by X- Ray pictures to determine blockages. Although its often considered the “ Gold Standard “ in diagnosing arterial blockages, its actually far from precise, so beware. Numerous technical problems can undermine the accuracy of the test, leading to false negatives and false positives. Plus, this is one test where human interpretation of the results can vary widely, by as much as 50% depending on who’s reading the test results.

That’s pretty darn scary; WOW!

So what should you do?

If your Doctor tells you yo have a angiogram, consider it carefully.

First, get a second opinion.

Full Body CT Scans: You may have heard a commercial on the radio or seen ads in your newspaper touting a painless, non- invasive test to predict your risk of heart disease and cancer.

These very provocative ads often end with the testimonial of a grateful patient who, thanks to this test, was “fortunate” enough to have had a biopsy or angiogram and angioplasty – leaving him and many listeners convinced that the CT Scan saved their lives.

“DON’T BELIEVE IT”

Without getting into a whole lot of detail, in my opinion the science behind CT Scans isn’t sound science. It’s plagued with too many inaccuracies, and exposes you needlessly to harmful levels of radiation.

So what should you do?

Avoid Full Body CT Scans. There is simply no sound evidence that this type of preemptive, pre- Symptomatic Screening saves lives.

In fact, the FDA, the American College of Radiology, and the American Cancer Society all caution against having this procedure.

As you can see, diagnostic and screening tests are a mixed bag. I’m not saying that all screening tests are worthless, nor am I telling you to never have any of these tests done. That choice is up to you.

But the more you know about your healthcare, the better off you are.

Be sure to ask for a copy of the results of any medical tests completed, it's your right.

And finally the bottom line is you need to be a proactive patient – your health depends on it!

Be Well Naturally,

Dr. F. James Weston