A Visit to the Doctor's Office

Americans go to the doctor — a lot. In fact, according to the latest report from the National Center for Health Statistics, in 2007 we paid 1.2 billion visits to U.S. physician offices, hospital emergency rooms and hospital outpatient departments. On average, that's four visits a year for every man, woman and child.

About half of our walk-in medical care visits (48 percent) were made to primary care physicians' offices. The rest were to medical specialists (18 percent) and surgical specialists (16 percent) in office-based practices, and to emergency departments (10 percent) and outpatient departments (7 percent) at hospitals.

Top 20 Reasons We Go to the Doctor
1. High blood pressure
2. Well-baby or well-child checkup
3. Upper respiratory infections, including colds
4. Osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, and other joint disorders
5. Back problems
6. Malignant tumors
7. Diabetes
8. Rheumatism
9. Specific procedures and aftercare (such as plastic surgery and dialysis)
10. General medical exam
11. Pregnancy exam
12. Follow-up medical exam
13. Ear infection
14. Asthma
15. Heart disease (excluding ischemic disease), such as irregular heartbeats or heart failure
16. Gynecological exam
17. Ischemic heart disease (blocked arteries reducing blood and oxygen flow to the heart)
18. Allergies
19. Mental illness, including depression, anxiety and substance abuse
20. Chronic sinusitis

When is the last time you went to visit your doctor? Have you added health screenings and checkups to your 2014 family calendar? You should plan ahead for your preventive care appointments. Regular health exams and tests can help find problems before they start, and when your chances for treatment and cure are better. By getting the right health services, screenings and treatments, you are taking steps that help your chances for living a longer, healthier life.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention