Take charge of your health

Cholesterol, blood pressure and blood sugar measures are key indicators of risk for major illness. If you keep a close eye on them with your doctor and “know your numbers,” you can take steps to keep these indicators in a healthy range and lower your risk for disease.

One of the best ways to do this is to take advantage of your preventive care benefits, including an annual check-up. For starters, it’s a free visit. Under federal health care reform, preventive care is provided at no out-of-pocket expense to you.

In addition to a check of your vital signs, the annual exam is a great opportunity to engage in a genuine dialogue with your doctor. This dialogue not only helps you take charge of your health care. It also helps to paint a picture of your overall physical and emotional well-being. And if additional care is needed, it arms your doctor with valuable information to help provide better-coordinated care.

Here are 10 questions to consider asking your doctor; of course, there are many more:

1. How does my overall health compare to last year’s check-up?
2. Is my lifestyle creating any risks?
3. Should I make changes to my diet?
4. Which health screenings would you recommend?
5. What risks do I have for heart disease, cancer or other chronic conditions, where I might make lifestyle changes?
6. Is there anything about my family medical history I should be concerned about?
7. What can I do to reduce stress?
8. Should I get a flu shot?
9. Is there a generic equivalent to any of my prescriptions?
10. What can I do to improve my health?

Your annual exam presents a great opportunity to improve your well-being. Make the most of it!