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Re: Pinching Pennies to run Mondays on page A-3
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Medical costs are skyrocketing. In fact, medical expenses are the cause of half of all bankruptcies filed in the United States. Americans spent over $2.5 trillion, or $8,086 per person for the year 2009. In Alaska, we spent a total of $7.5 billion in 2010.

Chronic ailments such as heart disease, arthritis, and diabetes are major contributors to these costs. But proper screenings can help you stop or slow diseases.

A health screening is a test done to find a condition before symptoms begin. Screening tests help find diseases and conditions early, when they are easier to treat. Unfortunately, people's health often takes a back seat to families and careers. A leading women's health care expert states that "most women take better care of their cars than their bodies, because an annual inspection is required to keep driving your car."

Women and men need to take proactive steps to stay healthy. WebMD lists these necessary screenings.

- Blood pressure. High blood pressure can cause serious organ damage or death. Screening is easy and reliable. You can get a blood pressure check at your doctor, a drugstore or with a home testing kit.
- Cholesterol. All those over 35 years of age should be tested every three to five years unless the patient has other risk factors for heart disease, such as a family history of heart disease.
- Colorectal cancer. Colon cancer kills more than 56,000 people every year. But the CDC says that nearly 60% of these deaths could be prevented if everyone was screened properly and treated. Everyone over 50 years of age should have this screening each year. Those who have a family history of colorectal cancer may need to have earlier screenings.
- Diabetes. It is estimated that one-third of people who have diabetes don't know it. The earlier you diagnosis diabetes, the less likely you are to suffer from diabetic complications. Adults age 45 and older should be screened for diabetes every three years. You may need earlier or more frequent diabetes screening if you are
overweight *and* have one or both of the following risk factors: family history of diabetes or a sedentary lifestyle.

Many of us don’t hesitate to have these screenings in our regular checkup. Those who have insurance or are enrolled in a health care program schedule these classes annually to protect themselves. But the cost of these tests can be prohibitive if you don’t have insurance.

So today let's look at how to get free or reduced health screenings.

**Health Fairs.** You can get your blood pressure checked, blood work done, thyroid checked, vision screening and all around good health information at a free or reduced cost at your local health fair.

This weekend is the Fairbanks Fair, which will be held at Pioneer Park. Because it is run by an all-volunteer staff, you can get a blood screening for $45, thyroid for $30 more, PSA for $25 and the brand new screening for vitamin D for $50. In addition, avail yourself of the fun activities at the fair set up by local groups and businesses. Each year we have free massages, eye tests, hearing test, and a lot of excellent information on everything from eating vegetables to mental health issues. If you have questions about our Health Fair, call 374-6853.

If this date isn't convenient for you or if you live outside of Fairbanks, there are other Health Fairs for you. The Eagle Health fair will be held on May 5th and the Central Health Fair on May 19th.

**Public Health Center.** The state of Alaska runs an excellent public health center for its residents. There is no charge for child health services such as well child exams and immunizations. Some adult services are available. Charges for adult services are based on a sliding scale fee according to household income and family size. No one is refused service based on inability to pay. Call the center at 452-1776 for specific information.

**Interior Community Health Center.** They do basic health care and dental care on a sliding scale depending on income. Call them at 455-4567 for information.

**Breast Cancer Detection Center.** For women over 40, you should have a breast cancer screening every year. Our local BCDC offers mammograms at low cost, but has a special program for those who are unable to pay. They also have a mobile unit that goes to many of our rural locations. Call 479-3909 for further information.

Your health is precious. Protect it by getting the proper health screenings.

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