

To my patients:

Happy New Year!

More than six years into my practice I am finally getting this information sheet out to you. This is not a lot of new information but just a clarification on how I would like to work together with you in regards to your health.

As you know I only work part time in our clinic. This usually means that I work half days 3-4 days/week. This is in order to keep some sort of balance between my work in clinic/hospital and my family life.

On all days that I am not in clinic, my colleagues and our resident doctors are happy to see you.

Since I only work part-time, I do allow my patients to pre-book. Please remember though that these “pre-booked” appointments book up ahead of time so you often need to call 3-5 days in advance in order to get these spots. There are always “same-day” booking slots left over for emergencies. These must be booked by calling in at 9am.

Please note that most of the other physicians at Upstream Clinic do same-day booking only.

Unless you are booked for a “Complete Physical”, your appointment is booked as a 15-minute time slot. Although I do not like to set a maximum number of items that we have time to discuss, please be aware of this time allocation. If your appointment goes for much longer than 15-minutes I will likely be running late for the rest of my day and this can be an inconvenience for my other patients. On the other hand, there are always times when your health concerns may need more than 15 minutes of my time and I am happy to give you this attention when it is needed.

As you have realized, all of us physicians at Upstream Clinic are UBC Faculty Members and are committed to teaching our medical students and family medicine residents. Thank you for allowing our future physicians to learn from their experience with you. We all very much appreciate it. Please be reassured that resident doctors discuss all of their patients with the supervising doctor at the end of their day.

In regards to prescriptions, I prefer to see you in clinic for refills. This is because most medications require some level of monitoring. Blood pressure medications, for example, I usually give as a six-month prescription. This is because we should be monitoring your blood pressure every six months. There is often associated blood work that should be done at this time interval as well. Exceptions are obviously made if you have forgotten to ask for a prescription at a recent pharmacy and usually pharmacies are willing to give a short emergency supply of your medications if needed.

Please note that all opioid or benzodiazepine prescriptions (including Tylenol #3's) are only refilled in person and unless I am not available should always be refilled with me. This is a policy recommended by the BC College of Physicians.

In regards to results: I will only call you in regards to your blood work if there is something I am concerned about. I do encourage you to sign up for Ehealth so that you can view your own blood work online. If you do not hear from me but have questions about your blood work do not hesitate to come in to discuss.

In regards to all other investigations (CT scans, Ultrasounds etc.) you will always hear from me in some form or another. Please do not assume that “no news is good news” in regards to these tests. Exceptions to this are PAP smears (we will only call you if abnormal), tests ordered by specialists or mammograms or fecal occult blood tests (for which you receive a letter from the BC Cancer Agency).

This brings me to Preventative Care and Cancer screening tests.

Doctors of BC recommends a ‘Complete Physical’ on a yearly basis ONLY for patients with Chronic Health Conditions (High blood pressure, Heart Failure, Diabetes, COPD, previous cancer etc.). If you are healthy without any of these chronic conditions, it is recommended that we do “focused exams” based on any symptoms that you are experiencing. No benefit has been shown for regular complete physical exams in healthy individuals.

Here are the gross current guidelines for Cancer Screening in B.C. I encourage you to be involved in your health and ensure we are up to date on these screening modalities.

Breast CA: Mammogram every 2 years between the Ages of 50-74

- If personal or 1st degree relative with breast CA this should be done yearly
- Mammograms are optional between 40-50 and over the Age of 74 but you will not be automatically recalled by the screening program at these ages
- Results and reminders for repeat screening are sent out by BCCA

Colon Cancer: for the general Population (males & females) this consists of the FIT (Stool occult blood test) every two years between the ages of 50-74

- if this test is positive, a colonoscopy will be recommended
- once you have been found to have any adenomas (polyps) of any sort colonoscopies will be recommended going forward on a specified time interval
- With a first-degree relative, or a personal history of colon Cancer, colonoscopies will be recommended
- Results and reminders have recently started to be mailed out to patients from the provincial program

Cervical Cancer: for females PAP smears now start at Age 25 and are suggested every 3 years between the ages of 25-69

- our clinic keeps track of PAP smear results and will call you when you are next due for a PAP smear

Prostate Cancer: for males between 50-70, annual prostate exam is recommended with consideration of doing a PSA (blood test) to supplement physical exam. We can discuss this in more detail individually.

Lung Cancer: this is a new screening option offered now for males & females between the ages of 55-80 with at least a 20 pack year smoking history (the equivalent of smoking a pack/year for 20 years) and consists of a low dose CT-Chest, this is done once with a follow-up scan one year later.

These can all be read in more detail at: <http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/screening>

Bone Density tests are currently recommended for males & females over 65 years of age. It is only recommended at an earlier age if you have significant risk factors (smoking, parent with an osteoporotic fracture, daily use of steroids, rheumatoid Arthritis etc.) Please see: <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/medical-tests/hw3738#hw3752>

Tests are repeated every 3 years if needed and should always be repeated on the same machine.

I recommend that all my **female** patients over the age of 50 take both Calcium (approx. 500mg daily) and Vitamin D (1000-2000 IU daily) for Osteoporosis prevention.

In regards to other supplements, I don't really recommend anything on a routine basis. For patients at moderate to high risk of cardiovascular disease I usually do recommend taking Omega 3's daily and eating a Mediterranean style diet. https://oldwayspt.org/system/files/atoms/files/OW_MediterraneanDietPyramid_0.pdf

Please note that our Canadian guidelines no longer recommend daily low dose Aspirin in the average person **without** significant risks for cardiovascular disease. The risks outweigh any benefit. Patients with diabetes or known cardiovascular disease or history of stroke/TIA, however, **should all be taking baby ASA** unless otherwise directed. Please don't hesitate to discuss this with me.

In regards to blood work, I have likely given you a standing order if there are blood tests we need to do on a regular basis. For healthy patients routine blood work is not recommended until the Age of 50 at which point we can discuss the need to screen for high Cholesterol or Diabetes depending on your personal risk factors.

I often get questions about vaccinations. Newborn vaccinations are all done by our Public Health Nurses. Flu vaccinations are offered every winter. You should have a Tetanus vaccination every 10 years. Pneumonia vaccinations are advised once for all adults over the age of 65. Adults between the age of 18-65 with Diabetes, Chronic Respiratory Disease, Chronic Kidney or liver disease or heart disease may warrant a pneumonia vaccination. We can discuss this on an individual basis.

I am grateful that we can work together in managing your health. I encourage you to be the leader in this journey while I am here to assist and give you my recommendations.

Please note that we are a scent free office and I ask that you treat all of our staff with great respect. Do not hesitate to discuss any of your concerns with me at any time.

To a healthy year of 2020!

With warm regards,

Suzanne Walter