

## WEEK 18: MAKE AN APPOINTMENT WITH YOUR HEALTH

If you'd asked me a few years ago whether I thought I took good care of my health, I'd have answered, "sure!" After all, my blood pressure's always been low, I've always eaten pretty well, I'm active, and I treat my relationship with a good night's sleep as a sacred pact.

So I was blown away when I found out, in March of 2013, that I had invasive – though very early stage – cervical cancer.



Yes, I'd had what felt like a ton of medical care since becoming a mom in my early 20s, but it dawned on me that the bulk of it had happened through the context of my pregnancies. I'd been a lot less diligent about follow-ups in between babies, and had rarely seen a health care provider who wasn't going to also attend one of my births. And now that Clara, my "baby", was four years old, it had been about that long since I'd seen any kind of medical professional.

My story turned out fine – treatment was limited to routine surgery, and I've been cancer-free since – but what a wake-up call: screenings and checkups are a vital part of self-care, and now that I'm no longer seeing an OB or midwife every couple of years, it's even more important that I establish new relationships with health-care providers.



Can you relate? When was the last time you visited your dentist? Saw your GYN? How about a routine checkup that had nothing to do with your reproductive organs? If the answer is "I don't remember" or "Way too long," this project is for you.



## Your Challenge: Make The Call

This week I want you to stop putting off that call: to the dentist, to the GYN, to the ophthalmologist, to the family practice doctor. The call that little voice in the back of your head says you should make, but keeps slipping through the cracks.

I know: this process seems like it should be easy, right? But for those of us with a touch of phone phobia, not so much. And even if you don't mind placing calls, the process of finding a care provider, calling during business hours, and then possibly having to be around for a return call can be overwhelming.

So let's break it down.

### First, collect information.

Whether you want to see a massage therapist about that chronic crick in your neck, need to get a PAP smear, or think you might maybe need a mammogram but can't remember what the age recommendations are, the first step is simply gathering intel.

#### **Some steps you might take in this phase:**

- **Check out [healthywomen.org](http://healthywomen.org)** to get a sense of what screenings are recommended for your age
- **Ask local friends for recommendations** of the kind of health care provider you're looking for (healthgrades.com is another good resource for reviews and ratings)
- **Check with your current practitioner** for ideas. If you currently see an OB/GYN, midwife, chiropractor, etc., he or she can give you names of other care providers that are more likely to be a good match for your current state of health and your care philosophy than if you just blindly Google.
- **Check with your insurance company** to make sure the care provider you're considering is covered.

## Second, take action.

This the part where so many of us get tripped up, right? We mean to do it...but actually placing that call tends to get lost amid our other to-dos.

### Here's how to make sure it happens:

- **Set aside time to make the call.** Put it on your calendar or to-do list right alongside your work or volunteer commitments and family must-do's. Yes, it's *that* important.
- **Prepare ahead of time.** Nothing is more discouraging than finally setting that appointment and then realizing you have a work meeting that afternoon or you're supposed to be volunteering in your son's preschool classroom that morning. Look at your calendar ahead of time to get a sense of which dates and times might work for you.
- **During the call, double-check** insurance coverage.
- **Get the appointment on your calendar immediately** – and consider lining up backup childcare in case your current sitter, relative, etc turn out to be not available that day.

It's so easy to put off our own health care, especially when we're used to having zero free time for own needs. But the beauty of moving Beyond Baby is that we tend to have more free time for the things we want to do – and it's up to us to use that time wisely.

## Challenge Checklist

- ✓ Decide which phone call or appointment you're going to make
- ✓ Gather information you'll need for the call
- ✓ Put it on your calendar or to-do-list to make the call; prepare ahead of time, double-check insurance while you're on the phone
- ✓ Follow through!
- ✓ Write notes & observations in workbook