Facebook Launches Preventive Health Tool

Users can receive checkup reminders for cholesterol tests and mammograms, among other benefits.

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Facebook has teamed up with several health organizations to offer a new tool called Preventive Health that connects users in the United States with health resources and checkup reminders for conditions such as heart disease and cancer, according to a recent press release.

The American Cancer Society, the American College of Cardiology, the American Heart Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provide the resources for the tool, which users can find on the Facebook mobile app.

The tool allows individuals to access information about recommended health checkups, such as cholesterol tests and mammograms, based on their age and sex. Reminders for flu shots also appear during flu season. People can record when exams are completed and set prompts to schedule future tests.

Facebook's new Preventive Health toolFacebook

Additionally, the tool offers a way to find federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) where folks can get screenings, tests and other health care services regardless of their ability to pay. FQHCs are found in underserved communities across the United States.

"Heart disease is the number one killer of men and women around the world, and, in many cases, it is 100% preventable," said Richard Kovacs, MD, president of the American College of Cardiology. "By incorporating prevention reminders into platforms people are accessing every day, we're giving people the tools they need to be proactive about their heart health."

According to Freddy Abnousi, MD, head of health care research at Facebook, the developers also addressed concerns about privacy and safety issues for users of the tool. "For example, Preventive Health allows you to set reminders for your future checkups and mark them done, but it doesn't provide us, or the health organizations we're working with, access to your actual test results," he said.

In addition, personal information about a person's activity in Preventive Health is not shared with third parties, such as health organizations or insurance companies, and ads won't pop up on newsfeeds based on information entered into the tool, Abnousi explained.

Facebook plans to expand and bring the tool to other countries in the future as well as collaborate with more organizations to provide additional resources for Preventive Health.

The company also recently introduced a Facebook feature in the United States, India, Brazil, Bangladesh and Pakistan that notifies people when blood banks need donations and makes it easy for them to sign up.

For more on Facebook's public health initiatives, read "New Facebook Feature Combats Anti-Vaccine Content."

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