

# How to talk with clients about preventive care screening

## Example Dialogue (client considering testing)

This is a sample script of a discussion that might take place with a client who has brought their pet in for an annual preventive visit.

Technician:	Since this is Smokey's annual, we'll want to run some blood work to ensure she's in good health. Blood work is like an internal exam. It helps us check organ function and gives us a better understanding of red blood cell, white blood cell and platelet counts so we can identify any potential health risks. The blood work also gives us a baseline as part of Smokey's medical history. We use the baseline to measure her future health status more easily and to identify any subtle changes early.
Pet owner:	What happens if you find something wrong?
Technician:	If any of Smokey's results are abnormal, Dr. Smith will review the results with you to discuss any concerns and, if necessary, next steps or further testing.
Pet owner:	OK. So what tests do you recommend? And how much will they cost?
Technician:	We recommend a complete blood count, a comprehensive chemistry, including electrolytes, and a urinalysis. The cost is \$X. Here's a brochure that describes each of the tests in more detail. If you have more questions after you've read it, we'll be happy to discuss them with you. (Give clients the IDEXX brochure for reference. It will help them remember what you've talked about in the exam room.)
Pet owner:	OK, thank you.

## What if clients object?

Here are some common questions and answers that can help clients understand and agree with annual preventive care testing.

### Q: Why does this cost so much?

A: This price includes all the services we recommend for your pet's annual visit:

- A physical exam to evaluate her physical health, similar to what your own doctor performs.
- Comprehensive blood tests used to evaluate liver and kidney function and to rule out dangerous conditions, such as diabetes, pancreatitis, infection and cancer. Testing annually will allow us to watch for any gradual changes in her test results that may give us cause for concern. (Be sure to include ALL services, including nail trims, dental inspections, ear cleanings, etc.)
- Vaccinations

### Q: Are all these services really necessary?

A: All of these services ensure your pet receives the best care possible—now and in the future. By combining the physical exam with the blood work we are able to get a complete view of your pet's overall health.

**1) The physical exam is an important way for us to evaluate your pet's external physical health.**

Unfortunately, it's not always apparent when pets aren't feeling well. Since they can't tell us what's going on, it's essential that we do our best to evaluate their health, inside and out. The doctor will check several things:

- Weight and diet
- Appearance of eyes, ears, face and mouth, with special attention to the teeth and gums
- Coat and skin
- Cardiovascular health (by listening to the heart with a stethoscope)

## 2) We consider blood work an “internal exam.” It provides an important baseline for your pet’s health.

Blood work allows us to screen for a variety of diseases and conditions that may not be evident in the physical exam. In addition, we can use these test results in the future to monitor her health:

We evaluate the healthiness of blood cells with a **complete blood count (CBC)**, testing for:

- Anemia
- Infection
- Inflammation

We evaluate organ function through a series of **comprehensive chemistry tests**:

- Liver—liver function, inflammation, infection and cancer
- Kidneys—kidney function, kidney disease, cancer
- Pancreas—screen for diabetes, pancreatitis, cancer
- Muscle and bone—muscle damage, trauma or inflammation and healthy bones
- Electrolytes—hydration of the body, imbalances affecting blood pH as well as nerve and muscle function

We evaluate the urinary system by way of a **urinalysis**:

- Urine Specific Gravity (USG)—concentration of the urine
- Microscopy—cell identification
- Urine test strip—can help identify diseases of the kidneys and the urinary tract

We'll provide you with a copy of the results for your file, as well as discuss the results with you during your visit. It's very helpful to have a copy of your pet's blood work when you travel or if you have to visit another clinic where they don't have your pet's health history.