



## **Routine Health Examinations**

If you're like many people, you probably wait until you're sick to pay your doctor a visit. By doing so, however, you're missing out on valuable opportunities to catch health problems at an early stage when they're easier to treat - or prevent them altogether. In other words, it's just as important to see your doctor when you're not sick.

### **Testing 1, 2, 3**

Are you aware of the health screenings or examinations you need? At what age should you start? And how often should you be tested? If you don't know that information, now is the time to learn:

- Health screenings and examinations help find problems at an early stage, when they can be treated most easily, most effectively, and with the fewest side effects.
- The information from these tests can help determine what's "normal" for you early on - so you're better able to detect any serious changes down the road.
- Results from screenings and examinations can also help you decide what lifestyle changes you may need to make in order to reduce - or prevent - your risk of disease.

The tests you receive - as well as when and how often you receive them - will depend on your age, health history, lifestyle and family history. Your health care provider can help you determine which screenings and examinations are appropriate for you.

### **Before your examination**

You should:

- Get ready.
- Know your family history.
- Know what immunizations you've had, and when you've had them.
- Know what health problems you're at risk for.
- Increase your awareness of medical tests that are of value to you.
- Review your health insurance benefits and talk to your insurance provider. Be sure you know what your health care benefit design does and does not cover, and understand the process for referrals and reimbursements.

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## Health screenings and examinations

The following are general guidelines for health screenings and examinations, based on recommendations from health agencies such as the American Cancer Society, American Diabetes Association, American Heart Association, and others.<sup>1</sup> Talk to your health care provider about how these recommendations fit your needs.

If you are at higher risk for any of these diseases or conditions, talk with your health care provider about earlier and/or more frequent screening.

<b>Men and women</b>	
Cardiovascular	<p><b>Complete fasting lipoprotein profile (cholesterol) test:</b> Starting at age 20 - at least every five years if results are low or normal. If borderline or high, more frequent testing is needed.</p> <p><b>Blood pressure measurement:</b> Each regular health care visit. At least every one to two years if your blood pressure is normal; more often if you have pre-hypertension, hypertension or take blood pressure medication.</p>
Body fat	<p><b>Body mass index (BMI) and waist circumference:</b> Each regular health care visit, at least every two years.</p> <p><b>Body composition measurement options:</b> Dual Energy X-ray Absorptiometry (DEXA) scan, hydrostatic (underwater) weighing, Bod Pod®, Bioelectrical Impedance Analysis (BIA), skin-fold measurements.</p>
Diabetes	<p><b>Blood glucose (sugar) test:</b> Starting at age 45 - every three years. Earlier or more frequently if you have one or more risk factors (i.e. family history, ethnic group, are sedentary, are overweight or had diabetes during pregnancy).</p>
Colorectal cancer	<p><b>Beginning at age 50, follow one of the five early detection options below:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yearly fecal occult blood test (FOBT) or fecal immunochemical test (FIT)</li> <li>• Flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years</li> <li>• Yearly FOBT or FIT plus flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years</li> <li>• Double-contrast barium enema every five years</li> <li>• Colonoscopy every 10 years<sup>2,3</sup></li> </ul>

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Skin	<p><b>Skin self-examination:</b> Become familiar with any moles, freckles or other spots on your skin. Check for skin changes once a month. Show any suspicious or changing areas to your doctor.</p> <p><b>Clinical skin examination:</b> Every three years if you're over 20; annually if you're over 40.<sup>2,3</sup></p>
Dental	Every six months.
Eye	<p><b>A comprehensive eye evaluation will help determine whether you need glasses or contacts and identify new vision problems such as glaucoma, macular degeneration, or cataracts.</b> If you don't wear glasses or contacts, have no symptoms of eye trouble, have no family history of eye disease, and you don't have a chronic disease (such as diabetes) that puts you at risk of eye disease: at least once between the ages of 20-29, at least twice between the ages of 30-39, every two to four years between the ages of 40-64 and every one to two years 65 and older.<sup>4</sup></p>
Depression	If you've felt "down", sad, or hopeless, and have felt little interest or pleasure in doing things you previously enjoyed for two weeks straight, talk with your health care provider about being screened for depression.
Sexually transmitted diseases	If you're sexually active, particularly if you've had multiple partners, talk with your health care provider to determine how often you should be screened for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Doctors have identified more than 20 STDs.

<b>Women</b>	
Breast cancer	<p><b>Breast Self-Exam (BSE)</b> - An option for women starting in their 20s, monthly.</p> <p><b>Clinical Breast Exam (CBE)</b> - Age 20-39, every three years; yearly after age 40.</p> <p><b>Mammogram</b> - Starting at age 40, yearly.<sup>3</sup></p>
Cervical cancer	<b>Pap test</b> - Start about three years after you begin having vaginal intercourse, but no later than 21 years old; yearly. After age 30, every one to three years, depending on the test your doctor uses and past results. <sup>3</sup>

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Osteoporosis	<p><b>Bone density test:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All women age 65 and older, regardless of risk factors.</li> <li>• Younger postmenopausal women with one or more risk factors (other than being white, postmenopausal and female).</li> <li>• Postmenopausal women with fractures<sup>5</sup>.</li> </ul>
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<b>Men</b>	
Prostate cancer	<p><b>Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA)</b> - Consider a yearly PSA blood test starting at age 50, annually. Starting at age 40 or 45 for men at high risk (strong family history or African-American). Ask your health care provider about the pros and cons of testing.<sup>2</sup></p>
Testicular cancer	<p><b>Physician testicular exam</b> - Starting at age 15, annually.</p> <p><b>Testicular self-exam</b> - An option for men starting at age 15, monthly.</p>

The benefits of prevention screenings are compelling. When disease is detected early, treatment is more likely to be effective.

### Questions for your health care provider

Ask your health care provider:

Should I be tested for \_\_\_\_\_?

How often should I be tested for \_\_\_\_\_?

Which test or tests for \_\_\_\_\_ would be best for me?

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<b>Immunizations*</b>	
Flu (influenza)	Vaccine every year starting at age 50.
Tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (Tdap)	Vaccine every 10 years.
Pneumonia	Vaccine once if you are age 65 or older (you may need it earlier if you have certain chronic illnesses or a weakened immune system).
Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B	Talk to your health care provider to see whether you need hepatitis A or hepatitis B vaccine. <sup>6</sup>

\*Refer to [Vaccines for adults: Which ones should you get?](#) for more extensive recommendations.

## For More Information

Be sure to learn about screening tests recommended by the American Cancer Society, American Diabetes Association and American Heart Association. Visit [www.everydaychoices.org](http://www.everydaychoices.org) for more information from these leading health agencies.

1. ["See Your Doctor."](#)Everydaychoice.org. American Cancer Society, American Diabetes Association, American Heart Association. 2004.
2. [Cancer Prevention and Early Detection Worksheet for Men.](#)American Cancer Society. 19 January 2007.
3. [Cancer Prevention and Early Detection Worksheet for Women.](#)American Cancer Society. 19 January 2007.
4. ["When You Should See An Eye M.D."](#)American Academy of Ophthalmology. Revised November 2003. 19 January 2007.
5. ["Physician's Guide to Prevention and Treatment of Osteoporosis."](#)National Osteoporosis Foundation. April 2003.
6. ["Immunization Recommendations for Adults."](#)Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research. MayoClinic.com. May 22, 2006.

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