

A focus on Women's Health

What you should do about your health

Checklist of Questions to ask your Doctor or Nurse

General Health and Wellness Questions

- How often do I need a physical exam, breast exam, pelvic exam and Pap test?
- Do I need a flu shot or other immunizations?
- Will changing my lifestyle (diet, exercise, smoking, drinking) help me avoid certain diseases?
- What can I do to be more healthy? Is there any reading material or videotapes on these topics?
- Are there support groups or community services that can help?

Medical Test Questions

- What will we know after the test is done?
- How do I find out the results? How long will it take to get the results?
- What does the test involve? What do I do to get ready for it?
- Are there any dangers or side effects with the test?

Symptoms and Diagnosis Questions

- Could my symptoms be caused by or related to something other than my current condition?
- What may have caused my current condition?

Treatment Questions

- How is this condition treated or managed?
- What long-term effects (if any) will it have on my life?
- How soon should treatment start? How long will it last?
- Are there other treatments available?
- How much will the treatment cost? Is it covered by insurance?
- What are the treatment's risks and side effects?

Medication Questions (you can also ask your pharmacist)

- What are the side effects?
- What should I do if I miss a dose?
- Are there foods, drugs, or activities I should avoid while taking this medicine?
- Is there a generic brand available at a lower price?

Understanding risk factors

Learning what you can and can't control

Part of learning how to take charge of your health involves understanding your risk factors for different diseases. Risk factors are things in your life that increase your chances of getting a certain disease. Some risk factors are beyond your control. You may be born with them or exposed to them through no fault of your own. Risk factors for certain conditions that you have little or no control over include:

- family history
- gender
- ethnicity
- age

Your lifestyle practices can protect your health. Risk factors you can modify include:

- nutrition/diet
- physical activity
- use of tobacco
- alcohol and drug use
- weight management
- safety practices such as the use of sunscreen and seatbelts
- and stress awareness and response.

In fact, it has been estimated that roughly one third of all U.S. adult deaths in 2000 could have been avoided by changing just three behaviors:

- stopping smoking
- eating a healthy diet (for example, eating more fruits and vegetables and less red meat)
- getting more physical activity.



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Office on Women's Health



Recommended screenings and immunizations for **Women** at **Average Risk** for Most Diseases

Screening Tests	Ages 18-39	Ages 40-49	Ages 50-64	Ages 65 and Older
General Health: Full checkup, including weight and height	Periodic at least every two years	Periodic at least every two years	Periodic at least every two years	Periodic at least every two years
Heart Health: Blood Pressure Measurement	At least every 2 years	At least every 2 years	At least every 2 years	At least every 2 years
Cholesterol test	Start at age 20, discuss with your doctor or nurse	Discuss with your doctor or nurse	Discuss with your doctor or nurse	Discuss with your doctor or nurse
Bone Health: Bone mineral density test			Discuss with your doctor or nurse. Persons at risk include those with low weight, prior fracture, or family history of osteoporosis	Get a bone mineral density test at least once. Talk to your doctor or nurse about repeat testing
Diabetes: Blood Sugar Test	Discuss with your doctor or nurse	Start at age 45, then every 3 years	Every 3 years	Every 3 years
Breast Health: Mammogram (x-ray of breast)	Baseline mammogram at age 35 years	Every 1-2 years. Discuss with your doctor or nurse	Every 1-2 years. Discuss with your doctor or nurse	Every 1-2 years. Discuss with your doctor or nurse
Reproductive Health: Pap test and pelvic exam	Every 1-3 years if you have been sexually active or are older than 21	Every 1-3 years	Every 1-3 years	Discuss with your doctor or nurse
Chlamydia test	If sexually active, yearly until age 25. Ages 26-39, if you are at high risk for chlamydia or other STDs, you may need this test.	If you are at high risk for chlamydia or other STDs, you may need this test.	If you are at high risk for chlamydia or other STDs, you may need this test.	If you are at high risk for chlamydia or other STDs, you may need this test.
Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) tests (gonorrhea and syphilis)	Both partners should get tested for STDs, including HIV, before initiating sexual intercourse.	Both partners should get tested for STDs, including HIV, before initiating sexual intercourse.	Both partners should get tested for STDs, including HIV, before initiating sexual intercourse.	Both partners should get tested for STDs, including HIV, before initiating sexual intercourse.
Colorectal Health: Fecal occult blood test			Yearly	Yearly
Flexible Sigmoidoscopy with fecal occult blood test			Every 5 years (if not having a colonoscopy)	Every 5 years (if not having a colonoscopy)
Colonoscopy			Every 10 years	Every 10 years
Eye and Ear Health: Visual acuity (eye) exam	Get your eyes checked if you have problems or visual changes	Every 2-4 years	Every 2-4 years	Every 1-2 years
Hearing test	Starting at age 18, then every 10 years	Every 10 years	Discuss with your doctor or nurse	Discuss with your doctor or nurse
Oral Health: Dental exam	One to two times every year	One to two times every year	One to two times every year	One to two times every year
Health Screening for depression and substance abuse problems	Discuss with your doctor or nurse	Discuss with your doctor or nurse	Discuss with your doctor or nurse	Discuss with your doctor or nurse
Immunizations: Influenza vaccine	Discuss with your doctor or nurse	Discuss with your doctor or nurse	Yearly	Yearly
Pneumococcal vaccine	One dose for persons 18 to 64 yrs with chronic conditions; check with your doctor if a second dose is recommended.	One dose for persons 18 to 64 yrs with chronic conditions; check with your doctor if a second dose is recommended.	One dose for persons 18 to 64 yrs with chronic conditions; check with your doctor if a second dose is recommended.	One time only for persons 65 and older or those with chronic disease such as diabetes and emphysema
Tetanus-Diphtheria-Pertussis (Tdap) vaccine	Every 10 years	Every 10 years	Every 10 years	Every 10 years
Zoster vaccine			For persons 60 and older	

PLEASE NOTE: These charts are guidelines only. Your doctor will personalize the timing of each test and immunization to best meet your health care needs.