



Stay Healthy at Any Age

Screening Tests for Women: What You Need and When - Your Checklist for Health*

What can you do to stay healthy and prevent disease? You can get certain screening tests, take preventative medicine if you need it, and practice healthy behaviors. Screening tests can find diseases early when they are easier to treat. Health experts have made recommendations, based on scientific evidence, about testing for the conditions below. Talk to your practitioner about which ones apply to you and how often you need to be tested.

DAILY STEPS TO HEALTH

Don't Smoke: If you do, talk to your practitioner about quitting. For tips, see *You Can Quit Smoking Now* (<http://www.smokefree.gov>). To talk to someone about how to quit, call the National Quitline: 1-800-QUITNOW. For more resources, go to <http://www.healthfinder.gov>, and search for "smoking." There are medications that can help.

Be Physically Active: Walking briskly, mowing the lawn, dancing, swimming, and biking are just a few examples of moderate physical activity. If you are not already active, start small and work up to 30 minutes or more of moderate activity most days of the week.

Eat a Healthy Diet: Emphasize fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products; include lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts, and eat foods low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium) and added sugars.

Maintain a Healthy Weight: Balance calories from foods and beverages with calories burned by activity. To prevent gradual weight gain over time, make small decreases in food and beverage calories and increase your activity.

Drink Alcohol in Moderation: Have no more than one drink a day (one 12-ounce bottle of beer or wine cooler, one 5-ounce glass of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits.) If you are pregnant, avoid alcohol.

GENERAL HEALTH SCREENING

Overweight/Obesity

Body Mass Index (BMI) is a measure of body fat based on height and weight, and is one way to screen for obesity.

BMI can be calculated online here:

<http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/> Your BMI: _____

(Underweight: <18.5; Normal: 18.5-24.9; Overweight: 25-29.9; Obese: 30+)

- Obesity is fast becoming public health enemy #1, affecting women physically and emotionally. Looking and feeling good are excellent reasons to lose weight, but avoid crash or unhealthy diets that may eliminate entire food groups.
- Increased activity helps maintain healthy weight. Start with as little as ten minutes a day and gradually increase your routine. <http://www.thewalkingsite.com/10000steps>

- A reasonable goal for most women is to consume a balanced diet as recommended by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). MyPyramid.gov also has nutrition and meal-planning tips for pregnant and breastfeeding moms: <http://www.mypyramid.gov>
- Weight Watchers is a balanced, proven weight loss plan used by millions: <http://www.WeightWatchers.com>
- Providence Health & Services offers classes for weight loss and emotional eating. 503-574-6595.
- Monarch Medical/Non-medical weight loss 1-866-731-lose. www.monarchmedical.net

High Blood Pressure

Optimal blood pressure in healthy women is < 120/80. Have your blood pressure checked at least every 2 years.

Diabetes

Test for diabetes if you have high blood pressure, obesity, high cholesterol, or diabetes during pregnancy. Begin routine screening at age 40, then retest every 3-5 years.

- Normal fasting blood sugar: < 110
- Insulin resistance (pre-diabetes): 110-126
- Diabetes: > 126

High Cholesterol

Have your cholesterol checked regularly starting at age 45. If you are younger than 45, talk to your practitioner about checking your cholesterol if any of the following applies:

- You have diabetes and/or high blood pressure.
- Heart disease runs in your family.
- You smoke or are overweight (look at your BMI).

Normal cholesterol levels in healthy women:

- Total cholesterol < 200
- HDL (good cholesterol) > 60
- LDL (bad cholesterol) < 130
- Triglycerides (bad cholesterol) < 150

The National Cholesterol Education Program has tips to help you understand cholesterol and how to reduce it, including heart healthy recipes: <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/ncep/>

* Some screening tests listed may not be covered by your health plan. Because you will be charged for uncovered tests, WHA recommends checking first with your insurance provider for benefits.

Depression

Emotional health is as important as physical health. If you've felt "down," sad, or hopeless over the last 2 weeks, or have less pleasure in regular activities, talk to your practitioner about being screened for depression.

Bladder Health

Bladder issues such as leaking, or more frequency or urgency when urinating, become more common as women age. If you have these or other bothersome symptoms, please talk with us.

Osteoporosis (Thinning of the Bones)

Begin having regular bone density scans at age 65 to screen for osteoporosis. If you are post-menopausal and have other risk factors such as smoking, broken bones as an adult, weight < 127 lbs., or family history of osteoporosis, ask us about being tested early.

- Before menopause, bone density testing is not recommended except in special circumstances.
- Between diet and supplements, everyone is encouraged to get 800-1000 IU of vitamin D and 1000 mg of calcium daily to maintain bone health.
- Increase your calcium to 1500 mg after menopause (preferably divided into three doses of 500 mg each).
- Vitamin D testing is recommended in women with osteoporosis, and may be considered in others.

BIRTH CONTROL / PREGNANCY

Contraception

50% of all pregnancies in the US are unplanned. If you are sexually active, talk to us about your options.

Pre-Conception Counseling

If you are planning to get pregnant:

- Take 400 mcg of folic acid per day.
- Maintain a normal weight with exercise and a healthy diet. Obesity decreases your chance of getting pregnant and increases the risk of miscarriage.
- Discuss with your practitioner if you have any health issues, as these may affect pregnancy.

STD TESTING

Chlamydia and Other Sexually Transmitted Infections

25% of all teenage women have an STD. Test yearly for chlamydia and gonorrhea if you are sexually active and under 25. Talk to your practitioner if you are older – you may be higher risk if you have a new partner since your last test. Perfect use of condoms reduces the risk of spreading STDs, but cannot completely prevent them.

RPR (Syphilis Screening)

Recommended when other STDs are present.

HIV

Women should be tested for HIV at least once in their lifetime. There is no consensus about how often re-testing should occur, but it is recommended for women who:

- Are injection drug users.
- Have sex with partners who are injection drug users or are infected with HIV.
- Exchange sex for drugs or money.
- Have been diagnosed with any STD in the past year.
- Have had more than one sex partner since their most recent HIV test.

CANCER SCREENING

Individuals with a strong family history of cancer should start screening earlier than the general population and in some cases should take steps to prevent cancer, such as surgery or medication. If you have a strong family history of cancer, ask your practitioner if genetic testing is right for you.

Cervical Cancer

If you are under 26, talk to us about Gardasil, the vaccine against HPV (the virus that causes cervical cancer).

- Have a **Pap smear** every 1-3 years if you have ever been sexually active OR you are between 21 and 65.
- If you have had a hysterectomy and don't have a cervix, you may not need yearly pap smears.
- Specific recommendations have recently changed. Please consult with your practitioner.

Breast Cancer

- Have a mammogram every 1-2 years starting at age 40, and yearly after age 50.
- Monthly self breast exams (SBE) may be beneficial.

Colon Cancer

Begin testing at age 50. Your practitioner can help you decide which test is right for you. If you have a family history of colon cancer, you may need to be screened earlier.

Ovarian Cancer

There are no good screening tests, but fortunately, ovarian cancer is rare. If you are post-menopausal and have noticed persistent abdominal bloating, diarrhea alternating with constipation, the sense of getting full quickly while eating, and frequency or urgency with urination, these symptoms may be a sign of ovarian cancer. It is important to discuss these symptoms with your practitioner.

This information is based on recommendations from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the US Department of Health and Human Services, the US Preventive Services Task Force, and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. For more resources, order free publications at <http://www.ahrq.gov> or visit <http://www.healthfinder.gov>.

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