

MEDICAL CHECKUPS AND SCREENING TESTS

ORAL, HEARING AND VISION CARE

Oral Health

- Visit your dentist twice a year for checkups.
- Brush after meals with a toothbrush that has soft or medium bristles.
- Use toothpaste with fluoride.
- Use dental floss every day.
- Eat fewer sweets, especially between meals.
- Do not smoke or chew tobacco products.

Hearing

Hearing loss is one of the most common health problems. Your risk for hearing loss increases after age 50.

How can you tell if you have a hearing problem? Here are some signs:

- You may have to strain to hear a normal conversation.
- You may find yourself turning up the volume of the TV and radio so loud that others complain.

If you are worried about your hearing, talk to your doctor. He may suggest a hearing test. Hearing aids can help you hear well.



Vision

People 45 and older have more vision problems than younger people, and the problems are more likely to result in accidental injuries. By age 65, you should have regular eye exams.

If you have vision problems, eyeglasses or contact lenses can improve your vision. Doctors also have other ways to improve your vision and prevent you from losing your sight. Be sure to tell your doctor if you are having trouble with your vision.

TESTS TO FIND DISEASES OR CONDITIONS EARLY

Many diseases and conditions can be prevented or controlled if they are caught early. You can keep track of the tests.

High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure can lead to heart disease, stroke, and kidney disease. It is most common in African American persons and persons older than 45.

Being active and eating a healthy diet are two ways you can keep your blood pressure under control. Some people need to take medicine to keep their blood pressure at healthy levels. If you take medicine, be sure to talk to your doctor about how to take it. Do not skip any doses of medicine.

High Cholesterol

Too much cholesterol can clog your blood vessels and is a major cause of heart disease.

To help lower your cholesterol and keep it at a healthy level, eat the right foods, maintain a healthy weight, and be physically active. Your doctor may suggest you take medicine to lower your cholesterol.

You should start having your cholesterol checked if:

- You are a man 35 or older.
- You are a woman 45 or older.
- You are a man between the ages of 20 and 35 or a woman between the ages of 20 and 45, and you have other risk factors for heart disease such as tobacco use, diabetes, high blood pressure, or a family history of heart disease.

Diabetes

Diabetes, or high blood sugar, is a major cause of blindness, kidney disease, high blood pressure, stroke, heart disease, and amputation of the lower legs and feet. Almost all adults who have diabetes have type 2 diabetes. This type usually appears in middle age. The number of people in the United States who have type 2 diabetes is growing.

Exercise, a healthy diet, and watching your weight can lower your chances of getting type 2 diabetes. If you already have diabetes, those health habits and quitting smoking can help you prevent or control many of the problems of diabetes.

Your risk for type 2 diabetes increases as you get older. In the United States, almost 1 in 5 people between the ages of 65 and 74 have diabetes.

Your risk for type 2 diabetes also is higher than average if:

- You are American Indian, Alaska Native, Hispanic, or African American.
- You have a family member with diabetes.
- You are overweight.
- You had diabetes during pregnancy.

Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis, or thinning bones, makes your bones break easily. This condition is more common in women than in men. After women have gone through menopause, their bodies make less estrogen (a hormone that helps protect their bones). Their bones become more prone to breaking.

Half of all women past menopause will break a bone during their lives. A bone density test can help determine whether your bones are prone to breaking. If they are prone to breaking, your doctor may suggest that you take a medicine to reduce your risk for fractures.

You can reduce your risk for osteoporosis by:

- Doing weight-bearing exercises, such as walking, and climbing stairs.
- Getting 1,000 to 1,300 milligrams of calcium every day by eating the right foods. A cup of milk or plain yogurt has 300 milligrams of calcium. You can also take calcium pills with vitamin D if you are not getting enough calcium in the food you eat.
- Not smoking.

- Taking medicines that can help prevent osteoporosis.

TESTS AND EXAMS TO FIND CANCERS

You can increase your chances of finding a cancer before it has spread by getting certain screening tests and exams regularly. Many cancers can be treated more easily when they are found early.

The tests you get and how often you get them will depend on your age, health history, and risks, such as family history and lifestyle.

Colorectal Cancer

Colorectal cancer is second only to lung cancer as a cause of death from cancer. But if colorectal cancer is caught early, it can be treated.

Older men and women are more likely to get colorectal cancer than those who are younger. Starting at age 50, you should be tested for colorectal cancer. Tell your doctor if you have had polyps or if you have family members who have had colorectal cancer, breast cancer, or cancer of the ovaries or uterus.

Breast Cancer

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in the United States.

From age 40 on, your risk for breast cancer increases. If you have a sister or mother who has had breast cancer, your risk is even higher. A mammogram every 1-2 years beginning at age 40 can help find this disease early when it is easier to treat.

Oral Cancer

Oral cancer includes cancers of the lip, tongue, pharynx, and mouth. Most oral cancers occur in people older than 40 who use tobacco or alcohol. People who are in the sun a lot are at risk for cancer of the lip.

You can help prevent oral cancer by not smoking or abusing alcohol. If you are outdoors a lot, use a sun block on your lips. If you chew or smoke tobacco or abuse alcohol, you may want your dentist to examine your mouth for signs of oral cancer during your regular dental checkup. You also may need to see your dentist more often.