



Women's Preventive Healthcare Guidelines

What is preventive healthcare?

Preventive healthcare is decreasing your risk of injury and disease by doing the following:

- Practice healthful habits and avoid injury.
- Undergo screening examinations and tests for early detection of disease.
- Receive appropriate immunizations to prevent disease.

Who can help with preventive healthcare?

The preventive healthcare steps outlined above require that you take an active part in your health care. This means working closely with your healthcare providers.

Several types of healthcare providers offer preventive health care services including: pediatricians, family physicians, internists, obstetricians and gynecologists, dermatologists, dentists, ophthalmologist and nurse practitioners. Some people have several types of healthcare providers that take care of some portion of their preventive healthcare needs.

Regardless of your situation, to avoid confusion and ensure your health, you should know what role each provider plays in your preventive care. If you are not sure, ask them.

When should preventive healthcare occur?

Most of these guidelines can be met by yearly visits to the appropriate healthcare provider. Because preventive healthcare is important, it is usually best to have a visit devoted entirely to preventive healthcare rather than try to "fit it in" at a visit made because of a problem you are having.

Why these guidelines?

These guidelines are compiled from the most recent recommendations by the *American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists*, the *American Cancer Society*, and *U.S. Preventive Services Task Force*.

These guidelines are for healthy adult women without medical problems. If you have a medical problem, some of the guidelines may be different for you. Ask your healthcare provider for advice.

Be an active participant in your health.

We recommend that you read these guidelines and become actively involved in your preventive healthcare. Follow the recommended healthy habits and avoid injury. If you have not had any examinations, tests, or immunizations that are recommended by these guidelines, please ask your healthcare provider(s) about them.

We hope these guidelines help you in your efforts to stay healthy!

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HEALTHFUL HABITS AND AVOIDING INJURY

Fitness

- **Exercise:** Get regular moderate exercise and adequate sleep.
- **Weight:** Maintain a healthy weight.
- **Diet:** Eat a diet low in fat, cholesterol, and sodium, and rich in fruits, grains and vegetables.
- **Calcium:** Consume adequate calcium (1000 milligrams a day if premenopausal, 1200-1500 milligrams a day if postmenopausal).
- **Folic acid:** Take at least 400 micrograms of folic acid a day in vitamin form if any possibility of becoming pregnant (if you have had a child with spina bifida ask for special recommendations).
- **Dental Hygiene:** Brush and floss to prevent dental disease.

Risk Behaviors

- **Sun Exposure:** Avoid unprotected sun exposure.
- **Tobacco and illegal drug use:** Avoid tobacco and illegal drugs.
- **Alcohol:** Avoid or keep alcohol consumption moderate (no more than 1 drink daily).

Sexuality

- **Sexually transmissible disease:** Prevent by partner selection and barrier protection.
- **Unintended pregnancy:** Avoid by postponing sexual involvement or by the use of contraception.
- **Preconceptional counseling:** Seek healthcare advice before becoming pregnant.

Self Examinations

- **Self breast examinations:** Perform monthly.
- **Self skin examinations:** Perform monthly.

Injury Prevention

- **Motor Vehicle:** Wear your seat belt and drive sober and defensively.
- **Workplace:** Practice hearing and eye safety.
- **Household:** Prevent falls. Practice firearm safety. Keep poisons/medicines out of reach of children.
- **Recreational:** Wear helmets. Avoid hazardous activities.
- **Suicide:** Seek help for stress, depression and suicidal thoughts.
- **Domestic violence/Homicide:** Avoid or seek help for abusive situations.

SCREENING EXAMINATIONS AND TESTS

Examinations

- **Physical Examination:** Once yearly or as appropriate.
- **Pap Test:** Yearly beginning at 18 or earlier if sexually active.
- **Dental Checks:** All adults on professional advice of dentist. Should include cleaning.
- **Vision/Glaucoma Screening:** On professional advice of eye specialists.

Tests

- **Urinalysis:** Yearly beginning at age 65.
- **Cholesterol:** Every 5 years beginning at age 45.
- **Mammography:** Every 1-2 years from age 40 to age 50, yearly beginning at age 50.
- **Stool test for blood:** Yearly beginning at age 50.
- **Sigmoidoscopy:** Every 3-5 years beginning at age 50.

Other examinations and tests for people with certain risk factors:

Skin examination, blood count, lipid profile, bone mineral density, blood sugar, thyroid test, HIV test, sexually transmitted disease tests, TB skin test, colonoscopy, genetic testing and counseling.

IMMUNIZATIONS

- **Tetanus-diphtheria booster:** Every 10 years.
- **Hepatitis B vaccine:** Once for women under age 18 not previously immunized. Once for all women who are at an increased risk for hepatitis B by either occupation, having close contact with hepatitis B, practicing at risk sexual activity, receiving blood products, or using intravenous drugs.
- **Influenza vaccine:** Every year in the autumn for women beginning at age 65 and all women wishing to decrease their chance of having the flu. Every year in the autumn for women with diabetes, heart disease, lung disease, kidney disease, blood disorders, cancer, other chronic medical diseases or who are residents of a long term care facility. Also all pregnant women who will be in the second or third trimester during the epidemic flu season.
- **Pneumococcal vaccine:** At age 65 or younger for women with indications for the influenza vaccine and those without a spleen.
- **Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR):** Once for women of childbearing age and no evidence of immunity.
- **Chickenpox vaccine:** Once for women of childbearing age and no evidence of immunity.