

Screening Tests for Healthy Women

Introduction

The following recommendations are general guidelines on screening tests for healthy women. The doctor may recommend a different screening schedule based on a variety of factors, particularly the personal health history, age and family medical history.

Blood Pressure Reading

▶ What is It?

Measures the amount of pressure the heart generates when pumping blood out through the arteries (systolic pressure) and measures the amount of pressure in the arteries when the heart is at rest between beats (diastolic pressure).

▶ Why?

For early detection of high blood pressure (hypertension). The longer high blood pressure goes undetected and untreated, the higher the risk of heart attack, paralysis, heart failure and kidney damage.

▶ How Often?

It is recommended that an initial test at age 18, then at least every two years. For borderline blood pressure more frequent screening may be required.

Clinical Breast Examination

▶ What is It?

A physical examination of the breasts and armpits for colour changes, skin irregularities, changes in the nipples, for any lumps and enlarged lymph nodes.

▶ Why?

To detect suspicious changes and to exclude breast cancer.

▶ How Often?

It is recommended that a clinical breast examination in conjunction with screening mammography to be done every one to two years, beginning at age 40.

Pelvic Examination

▶ What is It?

The doctor examines the external genitals, vagina, and cervix for discoloration, swelling or sores. Doctor also does internal examination while simultaneously pressing down on the abdomen to examine the uterus and ovaries.

▶ Why?

To detect any abnormalities, such as tumors, infections or other problems such as muscle weakness causing the uterus or bladder to sag. If one has an abnormal discharge, it can be obtained to identify the cause.

▶ How Often?

Pelvic examinations to be started at the same time as the first Pap test. Subsequent pelvic examinations to be done every three years. If one is at a high risk of gynecologic cancers, such as cervical or ovarian cancer, one requires to be examined more frequently.

Pelvic examination may be followed by Sonography (an ultrasound-based diagnostic imaging technique used to visualize muscles and internal organs, their size, structures and possible pathologies or lesions. Obstetric sonography is commonly used during pregnancy)

Eye Examination

▶ What is It?

One reads eye charts and has the pupils dilated with eye drops. The eye movement, side (peripheral) vision, color vision and the sharpness (acuity) of the eyesight are also checked. The inside of the eye is checked using an instrument called an ophthalmoscope and pressure inside the eyeball is measured by tonometry.

▶ Why?

To identify vision problems. Common vision problems with aging include:

- Glaucoma. Increased pressure in the eye, which can lead to vision loss.
- Macular degeneration. Damage of retinal cells, which gradually decreases vision.
- Cataracts. Clouding of the lens of the eye, which blurs vision.

▶ How Often?

It is recommended that the vision should be checked:

- At least once between ages 20 and 39
- Every two to four years between ages 40 and 64
- Every one to two years beginning at age 65

Frequent checkups may be required if one suffers from any ailment.

Cholesterol Test

▶ What is It?

A simple blood test that measures total cholesterol, low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol (the "bad" cholesterol), high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol (the "good" cholesterol) and triglycerides.

▶ Why?

To evaluate the level of cholesterol in the blood as abnormal levels raise the risk of heart attack and paralysis.

▶ How Often?

Starting at age 45, it is recommended to have cholesterol measured every five years. One may require more frequent measurements if the levels are abnormal. If anyone is at high risk of coronary heart disease, the doctor may begin screening at an earlier age.

Fasting Blood Sugar Test

▶ What is It?

Measures the level of sugar (glucose) in the blood after overnight fast.

► Why?

High glucose levels can be an indication of diabetes.

► How Often?

If one is 45 years of age or older, it is recommended to have the blood glucose level checked every three years. If there is a risk of diabetes, one may require test at a younger age or more frequently. One should also get tested if they have signs and symptoms of diabetes, such as excessive thirst, frequent urination, unexplained weight loss, fatigue, or slow-healing cuts or bruises.

Mammogram

► What is It?

It is X-rays of the breast tissue.

► Why?

To detect breast lumps suspicious changes or calcifications. These small lumps can be the first finding of early-stage breast cancer.

► How Often?

It is recommended that a screening mammogram every one to two years after age 40, depending on risk factors for breast cancer and after age 50, annually.

Pap Test

► What is It?

The doctor inserts a speculum into the vagina to observe the cervix. Then using a small spatula and a brush or cotton swab, the doctor gently removes cells from the cervix and the canal that enters the uterus. The doctor places the cells on a glass slide or into a fluid-filled bottle and sends them to a laboratory for microscopic examination.

► Why?

To detect cancer and precancerous changes of the cervix with increased risk factors eg:

-
- History of sexually transmitted disease, particularly human papilloma virus
 - Multiple sex partners
 - History of abnormal cells in the cervix (cervical dysplasia)
 - History of vaginal or vulvar cancer
 - Smoking

▶ How Often?

It is recommended that screening for cervical cancer within three years of the first sexual encounter or age 21, whichever comes first. One should have a Pap test at least every three years. Cervical cancer is extremely rare in women under age 25.

One no longer needs routine screening for cervical cancer if:

-
- Age is 65 or older, had three normal test results in a row, had normal Pap tests over the past 10 years, and aren't at high risk of cervical cancer.
 - Had removed the uterus and cervix surgically.

Bone Density Measurement

▶ What is It?

A scan of the lower back, hip region, wrist or heel, which measures the density of the bones, indicating the risk of fracture. Dual energy X-ray absorptiometry (DEXA) scans are the best for deciding when treatment is needed and for assessing the effects of treatment for osteoporosis.

▶ Why?

To detect osteoporosis - a disease characterized by a loss of bone mass, seen more in postmenopausal women, which makes bones more fragile and likely to break. Common sites of fractures are hip, spine and wrist.

▶ How Often?

It is recommended that women age 65 and older be screened routinely for osteoporosis. In those with risk factor for osteoporosis, it is recommended that one begins routine screening earlier. Certain factors that increase risk of osteoporosis are a low body weight, a history of fractures or a family history of osteoporosis.

Consult your doctor for further information or queries

Adapted from www.ohiohealth.com/body mayo.cfm?id=6&action=detail&ref=1833 on accessed on 13/3/06.

Rating:



Your rating: None

Source URL: <https://ciplamed.com/content/screening-tests-for-healthy-women>