

Women's Health Screening Guidelines

Standard screening tests can help identify diseases or conditions at their earliest stages, when treatment is more likely to be successful. These guidelines are intended for women at low risk for conditions associated with the screenings suggested. If you are at high risk for a condition, such as diabetes or breast cancer, your health care professional will most likely recommend more frequent and/or additional screening options.

<u>Type of Test</u>	<u>Explanation</u>	<u>When and How Often</u>
• Blood Pressure Reading	Measures the pressure in blood vessels. High blood pressure means your heart is working too hard, putting strain on your blood vessels and arteries; persistent high blood pressure is associated with hypertension, heart disease and stroke	Every 2 years for women over age 21; more frequently if borderline-high or high blood pressure is indicated, or if you have a history of high blood pressure
• Bone Mineral Density Test	Specialized equipment measures the density of the spine, hip, wrist or heel to predict fracture risk, monitor treatment or determine rate of bone loss due possibly to osteoporosis	Ask your health care professional for guidance; periodic screenings may be recommended for postmenopausal women age 65 or younger who have risk factors for osteoporosis, and all women age 65 and older
• Breast Examination* (Clinical breast exam)	A clinical breast exam is performed by a health care professional who will visually inspect your breasts as well as feel them for any abnormalities	Women ages 20 to 39* should have their breasts examined by their health care professionals every three years and once a year beginning at age 40
• Cholesterol Check	A blood test that measures fats (lipids) in the blood stream (cholesterol and triglycerides are the two major fats). A fasting lipoprotein profile measures total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, HDL cholesterol and triglyceride levels. High blood cholesterol is a risk factor for heart disease and stroke	All women age 20 or older should have a fasting lipoprotein level every 5 years; if levels are abnormal or if you have a history of heart disease, ask your health care professional how often you should be tested and which testing option should be used
• Colon Cancer Screening	A fecal occult blood test detects invisible amounts of blood in feces, which could indicate that polyps have developed in the colon; other procedures, including sigmoidoscopy, may be recommended to view colon and large intestine for polyps or other abnormality	Beginning at age 50, women should have an annual fecal occult blood test and a flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years; women with a family history of colon cancer or polyps should ask their health care professionals when and how often to have screenings
• Hearing Test	Test to determine hearing loss or assess need for hearing aid	Immediately, if you are having trouble hearing

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<u>Type of Test</u>	<u>Explanation</u>	<u>When and How Often</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mammography 	Low-dose X-ray views of both breasts for abnormalities that could be cancerous	Once every 1 to 2 years for women ages 40 and older
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pap Test 	Lab test that screens for abnormal cells or precancerous changes in the cervix	Until age 70, once a year, for any woman who has ever been sexually active; after normal results from 3 tests in a row, screenings may be done every 1 to 3 years, on the advice of your health care professional. Women who have had hysterectomies do not need regular Pap tests unless surgery was cancer-related
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pelvic Examination 	Manual examination by a health care professional of the ovaries and uterus for abnormalities that may be cancerous or causing discomfort or other symptoms	Until age 70, once a year, for any woman who has ever been sexually active
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skin Examination 	Visual inspection of the skin for abnormal or precancerous conditions	Every 3 years between ages 20 to 40; yearly for women age 40 and older; skin self-exams should also be performed monthly
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision Examination 	Specialized tests that evaluate vision loss or other eye conditions, such as glaucoma or macular degeneration	Women ages 40 to 64 should have routine eye exams every 2 to 4 years; after age 65 exams should be yearly

* Most major medical organizations continue to support clinical breast examination in cancer screening guidelines; however, several organizations no longer include breast self-examination (BSE) as an early detection strategy because research has not demonstrated that BSE saves lives.

Sources: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, American Cancer Society, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Heart Association, American Academy of Ophthalmology, American Geriatric Society, American Medical Association, American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, National Cancer Institute, U.S. Preventive Services Task Force

This information is provided by The National Women's Health Resource Center. The National Women's Health Resource Center is the leading independent nonprofit organization dedicated to women's health. For more information on women's health issues from this organization, call toll-free 1-877-986-9472 or visit the website at www.healthyywomen.org

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