

The information in this fact sheet is based on research findings from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF). The USPSTF is the leading independent panel of experts in prevention and primary care. The Task Force, which is supported by AHRQ, conducts rigorous, impartial assessments of the scientific evidence for the effectiveness of a broad range of clinical preventive services, including screening, counseling, and preventive medications. Its recommendations are considered the gold standard for clinical preventive services.

**Put Prevention Into Practice**, part of the AHRQ Dissemination and Implementation Program, is designed to increase the appropriate use of clinical preventive services, such as screening tests, preventive medications, and counseling. Based on the recommendations of the USPSTF and Government agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Put Prevention Into Practice tools and resources help clinicians determine which preventive services their patients should receive and make it easier for patients to participate in, understand, and keep track of their preventive care.

For more information about USPSTF recommendations and Put Prevention Into Practice, go to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality Web site at: [www.preventiveservices.ahrq.gov](http://www.preventiveservices.ahrq.gov).

## Women: Stay Healthy at Any Age

### Your Checklist for Health



The most important things you can do to stay healthy are:

Get recommended screening tests • Be tobacco free • Be physically active  
Eat a healthy diet • Stay at a healthy weight • Take preventive medicines if you need them.

### Screening Tests for Women: What You Need and When

Screening tests can find diseases early when they are easier to treat. Health experts from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force have made recommendations, based on scientific evidence, about testing for the conditions below. Talk to your doctor about which ones apply to you and when and how often you should be tested.

- Obesity:** Have your body mass index (BMI) calculated to screen for obesity. (BMI is a measure of body fat based on height and weight.) You can also find your own BMI with the BMI calculator from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute at: <http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/>.
- Breast Cancer:** Have a mammogram every 1 to 2 years starting at age 40.
- Cervical Cancer:** Have a Pap smear every 1 to 3 years if you:
  - Have ever been sexually active.
  - Are between the ages of 21 and 65.
- High Cholesterol:** Have your cholesterol checked regularly starting at age 45. If you are younger than 45, talk to your doctor about whether to have your cholesterol checked if:
  - You have diabetes or high blood pressure
  - Heart disease runs in your family.
  - You smoke.
- High Blood Pressure:** Have your blood pressure checked at least every 2 years. High blood pressure is 140/90 or higher.
- Colorectal Cancer:** Have a test for colorectal cancer starting at age 50. Your doctor can help you decide which test is right for you. If you have a family history of colorectal cancer, you may need to be tested earlier.
- Diabetes:** Have a test for diabetes if you have high blood pressure or high cholesterol.
- Depression:** Your emotional health is as important as your physical health. If you have felt “down,” sad, or hopeless over the last 2 weeks or have felt little interest or pleasure in doing things, you may be depressed. Talk to your doctor about being screened for depression.
- Osteoporosis (Thinning of the Bones):** Have a bone density test beginning at age 65 to screen for osteoporosis. If you are between the ages of 60 and 64 and weigh 154 lbs. or less, talk to your doctor about being tested.
- Chlamydia and Other Sexually Transmitted Infections:** Have a test for chlamydia if you are 25 or younger and sexually active. If you are older, talk to your doctor about being tested. Also ask whether you should be tested for other sexually transmitted diseases.
- HIV:** Have a test to screen for HIV infection if you:
  - Have had unprotected sex with multiple partners.
  - Are pregnant.
  - Have used or now use injection drugs.
  - Exchange sex for money or drugs or have sex partners who do.
  - Have past or present sex partners who are HIV-infected, are bisexual, or use injection drugs.
  - Are being treated for sexually transmitted diseases.
  - Had a blood transfusion between 1978 and 1985.

## Daily Steps to Health

**Don't Smoke.** If you do smoke, talk to your doctor about quitting. If you are pregnant and smoke, quitting now will help you and your baby. Your doctor or nurse can help you. And, you can also help yourself. For tips on how to quit, go to: 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 quit-smoking resources, go to: <http://www.healthfinder.gov/>, and search for "smoking."

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

**Stay at a Healthy Weight.** Balance calories from foods and beverages with calories you burn off by your activities. To prevent gradual weight gain over time, make small decreases in food and beverage calories and increase physical activity.

**Drink Alcohol Only in Moderation.** If you drink alcohol, have no more than one drink a day. (A standard drink is 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.

A good place to find reliable health information is at: [www.healthfinder.gov](http://www.healthfinder.gov).

## Should You Take Medicines to Prevent Disease?

- Hormones:** Do not take hormones to prevent disease. Talk to your doctor if you need relief from the symptoms of menopause.
- Breast Cancer Drugs:** If your mother, sister, or daughter has had breast cancer, talk to your doctor about the risks and benefits of taking medicines to prevent breast cancer.
- Aspirin:** Ask your doctor about taking aspirin to prevent heart disease if you are:
  - Older than 45.
  - Younger than 45 and:
    - Have high blood pressure.
    - Have high cholesterol.
    - Have diabetes.
    - Smoke.
- Immunizations:** Stay up-to-date with your immunizations.
  - Have a flu shot every year starting at age 50. If you are younger than 50, ask your doctor whether you need a flu shot.
  - Have a pneumonia shot once after you turn 65. If you are younger, ask your doctor whether you need a pneumonia shot.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provide more information on immunizations at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nip/recs/adult-schedule.htm>.

## More Information

For more information on staying healthy, order the following free publications from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Call the AHRQ Publications Clearinghouse at 1-800-358-9295, or send an e-mail to: [ahrqpubs@ahrq.hhs.gov](mailto:ahrqpubs@ahrq.hhs.gov).

- *The Pocket Guide to Good Health for Adults.*
- *The Pocket Guide to Staying Healthy at 50+.*

## Women's Screening Test Checklist

Take this checklist with you to your doctor's office. Write down when you have any of the tests below. Talk to your doctor about your test results and write them down here. Ask when you should have the test next. Write down the month and year. If you think of questions for the doctor, write them down and bring them to your next visit.

| Test                            | Last Test (mo/yr) | Results | Next Test Due (mo/yr) | Questions for the Doctor |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|---------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Weight (BMI)                    |                   |         |                       |                          |
| Cholesterol Total:              |                   |         |                       |                          |
| HDL (good):                     |                   |         |                       |                          |
| LDL (bad):                      |                   |         |                       |                          |
| Blood pressure                  |                   |         |                       |                          |
| Mammogram                       |                   |         |                       |                          |
| Pap smear                       |                   |         |                       |                          |
| Colorectal cancer               |                   |         |                       |                          |
| Diabetes                        |                   |         |                       |                          |
| Sexually transmitted infections |                   |         |                       |                          |
| HIV infection                   |                   |         |                       |                          |
| Bone density                    |                   |         |                       |                          |