

The information in this fact sheet is based on research from the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** and the **U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF)**, the leading independent panel of private-sector experts in prevention and primary care. The Task Force conducts rigorous scientific assessments of the effectiveness of a broad range of clinical preventive services. Its recommendations are considered the “gold standard” for preventive services delivered in the clinical setting. Additional details about the recommendations can be obtained from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality Web site (<http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/uspstfix.htm>) or by calling the AHRQ Publications Clearinghouse (1-800-358-9295).

The **Put Prevention Into Practice (PPIP)** program of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality is designed to increase the appropriate use of clinical preventive services, such as screening tests, chemoprevention and immunizations, and counseling. The PPIP program is based on the recommendations of the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. PPIP tools and resources enable doctors and other health care providers to determine which preventive services their patients should receive and make it easier for patients to understand and keep track of their preventive care.



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## Women: Stay Healthy at Any Age

### Checklist for Your Next Checkup



**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality**  
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What can you do to stay healthy and prevent disease? You can get certain screening tests, take preventive medicine if you need it, and practice healthy behaviors.

Top health experts from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force suggest that when you go for your next checkup, talk to your doctor or nurse about how you can stay healthy no matter what your age.

### Screening Tests: What You Need and When

Screening tests, such as mammograms and Pap smears, can find diseases early when they are easier to treat. Some women need certain screening tests earlier, or more often, than others. Talk to your doctor about which of the tests listed below are right for you, when you should have them, and how often. The Task Force has made the following recommendations, based on scientific evidence, about which screening tests you should have.

- Mammograms:** Have a mammogram every 1 to 2 years starting at age 40.
- Pap Smears:** Have a Pap smear every 1 to 3 years if you have been sexually active or are older than 21.
- Cholesterol Checks:** Have your cholesterol checked regularly starting at age 45. If you smoke, have diabetes, or if heart disease runs in your family, start having your cholesterol checked at age 20.
- Blood Pressure:** Have your blood pressure checked at least every 2 years.
- Colorectal Cancer Tests:** Have a test for colorectal cancer starting at age 50. Your doctor can help you decide which test is right for you.
- Diabetes Tests:** Have a test to screen for diabetes if you have high blood pressure or high cholesterol.
- Depression:** If you've felt “down,” sad, or hopeless, and have felt little interest or pleasure in doing things for 2 weeks straight, talk to your doctor about whether he or she can screen you for depression.
- Osteoporosis Tests:** Have a bone density test at age 65 to screen for osteoporosis (thinning of the bones). If you are between the ages of 60 and 64 and weigh 154 lbs. or less, talk to your doctor about whether you should be tested.
- Chlamydia Tests and Tests for Other Sexually Transmitted Diseases:** Have a test for Chlamydia if you are 25 or younger and sexually active. If you are older, talk to your doctor to see whether you should be tested. Also, talk to your doctor to see whether you should be tested for other sexually transmitted diseases.

## Should You Take Medicines to Prevent Disease?

- Hormones:** According to recent studies, the risks of taking the combined hormones estrogen and progestin after menopause to prevent long-term illnesses outweigh the benefits. Talk to your doctor about whether starting or continuing to take hormones is right for you.
- 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:** Talk to your doctor about taking aspirin to prevent heart disease if you are older than 45 and have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, or if you smoke.
- Immunizations:** Stay up-to-date with your immunizations:
  - Have a flu shot every year starting at age 50.
  - Have a tetanus-diphtheria shot every 10 years.
  - Have a pneumonia shot once at age 65.
  - Talk to your doctor to see whether you need hepatitis B shots.

## What Else Can You Do To Stay Healthy?

**Don't Smoke.** But if you do smoke, talk to your doctor about quitting. You can take medicine and get counseling to help you quit. Make a plan and set a quit date. Tell your family, friends, and co-workers you are quitting. Ask for their support. If you are pregnant and smoke, quitting now will help you and your baby.

**Eat a Healthy Diet.** Eat a variety of foods, including fruit, vegetables, animal or vegetable protein such as meat, fish, chicken, and eggs, or

beans, lentils, tofu, tempeh and grains, such as rice. Limit the amount of saturated fat you eat.

**Be Physically Active.** Walk, dance, ride a bike, rake leaves, or do any other physical activity you enjoy. Start small and work up to a total of 20-30 minutes most days of the week.

**Stay at a Healthy Weight.** Balance the number of calories you eat with the number you burn off by your activities. Remember to watch portion sizes. Talk to your doctor if you have questions about what or how much to eat.

**Drink Alcohol Only in Moderation.** If you drink alcohol, one drink a day is safe for women, unless you are pregnant. If you are pregnant, you should avoid alcohol. Since researchers don't know how much alcohol will harm a fetus, it's best not to drink any alcohol while you are pregnant.

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.

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**For more information** on staying healthy, order the following **free** publications in the Put Prevention Into Practice (PPIP) program from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (call the AHRQ Publications Clearinghouse at 1-800-358-9295), or find them on the AHRQ Web site at: <http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/ppipix.htm>.

More copies of this fact sheet, *Women: Stay Healthy at Any Age - Checklist for Your Next Checkup*, (in English and Spanish), Publication No. APPIP 03-0008, January 2004.

*The Pocket Guide to Good Health for Adults* (in English and Spanish), Publication No. APPIP 03-0001, May 2003.

*The Pocket Guide to Staying Healthy at 50+* (in English and Spanish), Publication No. AHRQ 04-IP001, November 2003.

## Screening Test Checklist

Take this checklist with you to your doctor's office and fill it out when you have had any of the tests listed below. Talk to your doctor about when you should have these tests next, and note the month and year in the right-hand column.

Also, talk to your doctor about which of the other tests listed below you should have in the future, and when you need them.

	The last time I had the following screening test was: (mm/yy)	I should schedule my next test for: (mm/yy)
Mammogram	_____	_____
Pap smear	_____	_____
Cholesterol	_____	_____
Blood pressure	_____	_____
Colorectal cancer	_____	_____
Osteoporosis	_____	_____
Chlamydia	_____	_____