



# The power of prevention

## Why a wellness exam is worth your time

Like it or not, your body changes as you get older. Wellness exams give you a chance to talk with your doctor about these changes. Plus these exams can help you build a relationship with the doctor over time. This could help you get better care if problems come up later.<sup>1</sup>

You may wonder if “wellness exam” is just a new term for “annual physical.” It isn’t. There are two key differences:

- They can happen any time. The timing depends on your age and your health.
- They focus on more than just problems. They also cover things you can do to live a healthier, more active life. For example, they may talk about watching your weight, getting a flu shot or getting your eyes checked. But if you have signs of a health problem, be sure to tell your doctor.

## What to expect

Most wellness exams start with a talk about your health history and any problems. After that, most doctors will spend time on things like:<sup>2</sup>

- Any medicines you take.
- How you eat — and how you could eat better.
- How physically active you are — and whether you should be more active.
- Any stress in your life or signs of depression.
- Drinking, smoking and recreational drug use.
- Safety measures like wearing your seat belt and shielding yourself from the sun.
- Your sexual habits and any risks they pose.
- Tests and vaccines you may need.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force puts out these general recommendations.<sup>3,4</sup> Your doctor may suggest other tests or more frequent tests. A lot depends on your risk factors. These are things that make you more likely to get an illness, like your family history or age.

## General recommendations

Screening	How often?
Blood pressure	At least every two years for adults 18 and older
Cholesterol	Regular screenings beginning at age 35 for men and 45 for women (younger if you smoke, have diabetes, have high blood pressure or have a family history of heart disease)
Skin exam	Self-exams at least once a year; talk to your doctor about screening (especially if you are fair-skinned or spend a lot of time outside)
Diabetes	Regular tests if you have high blood pressure or high cholesterol; talk to your doctor about other reasons you may need to be tested

## Women

Screening	How often?
Mammogram	Every one to two years for women 40 and older, with or without a breast exam
Pap test	Every one to three years if you are sexually active and between the ages of 21 and 70
Osteoporosis	Routine screening starting at age 65 (age 60 for women with risk factors like a small frame or weight under 155 pounds)
Chlamydia	Routine screening for all sexually active women age 25 and younger; talk to your doctor about tests for other illnesses that spread through sex

## Men

Screening	How often?
Colorectal cancer	Starting at age 50; talk to your doctor about the right test for you
Sexually transmitted diseases	Talk to your doctor about how often
Abdominal aortic aneurysm	Once between the ages of 65 to 75 if you have ever smoked

## Making the most out of your medical exam

Try to see the doctor early in the day. He or she may not be as rushed then. Also think about bringing a family member or friend with you. Your friend can help you take notes, voice your concerns and ask questions.

Doctor visits can be very short, so it's a good idea to come prepared. Before your visit, write down details like:<sup>2</sup>

- Your health history and your family's health history. This is even more important if anything has changed since your last visit.
- All the medicines you take. Note how much and how often. Be sure to include vitamins and over-the-counter drugs.
- Any concerns you have about your health.
- Any new symptoms you have.

Your doctor should be ready for your visit, too. He or she should know who you are and what you've talked about in the past. All it takes is a quick check of your chart before your visit. You deserve this type of personal care. And it's vital to building a long-term relationship with your doctor.

Visit [anthem.com](http://anthem.com) for more ways to get healthy – and stay healthy.



### Certain factual or statistical information was derived from the following sources:

- <sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Regular Check-ups are Important," [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov), updated April 2011, accessed December 2011.
- <sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Check-Up Checklist: Things to Do Before Your Next Check-Up," [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov), updated January 2010, accessed December 2011.
- <sup>3</sup> Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, "Women: Stay Healthy at Any Age," [ahrq.gov](http://ahrq.gov), updated September 2010, accessed December 2011.
- <sup>4</sup> Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, "Men: Stay Healthy at Any Age," [ahrq.gov](http://ahrq.gov), updated September 2010, accessed December 2011.