

Health Check-up for Women over 65

Even if you feel fine, you should still see your provider for regular checkups. These visits can help you avoid problems in the future. For example, the only way to find out if you have high blood pressure is to have it checked regularly. High blood sugar and high cholesterol levels also may not have any symptoms in the early stages. A simple blood test can check for these conditions.

There are specific times when you should see your provider. Below are screening guidelines for women over age 65.

BLOOD PRESSURE SCREENING

Have your blood pressure checked every year. If the top number (systolic number) is between 120 and 139 or the bottom number (diastolic number) is between 80 and 89 mm Hg or higher, have it checked every year.

If the top number is greater than 140, or the bottom number is greater than 90, schedule an appointment with your provider.

If you have diabetes, heart disease, kidney problems, or certain other conditions, you may need to be checked more often.

Watch for blood pressure screenings in your area. Ask your doctor if you can stop in to have your blood pressure checked.

CHOLESTEROL SCREENING AND HEART DISEASE PREVENTION

If your cholesterol level is normal, have it rechecked at least every 5 years.

If you have high cholesterol, diabetes, heart disease, kidney problems, or certain other conditions, you may need to be checked more often.

COLON CANCER SCREENING

Until age 75, you should have one of the following screening tests:

- A fecal occult blood (stool-based) test every year
- Flexible sigmoidoscopy every 10 years, along with a fecal occult blood test every year
- Colonoscopy every 10 years

You may need a colonoscopy more often if you have risk factors for colon cancer, including:

- Ulcerative colitis
- A personal or family history of colon cancer or rectal cancer
- A history of growths called adenomatous polyps

DIABETES SCREENING

If you are age 65 or older and in good health, you should be screened for diabetes every 3 years.

If you are overweight and have other risk factors for diabetes, ask your doctor if you should be screened more often.

EYE EXAM

Have an eye exam every 1 to 2 years.

Have an eye exam at least every year if you have diabetes.

HEARING TEST

Have your hearing tested if **you have symptoms of hearing loss.**

IMMUNIZATIONS

If you are over age 65, get a pneumococcal vaccine if you have never had one, or if it has been more than 5 years since you had the vaccine.

Get a flu shot every year.

Get a tetanus-diphtheria booster every 10 years.

You may get a shingles, or herpes zoster, vaccination once after age 60.

PHYSICAL EXAM

Have a yearly physical exam.

With each exam, your doctor will check your height, weight, and body mass index (BMI).

Routine diagnostic tests are not recommended unless your doctor finds a problem.

During the exam, your provider will ask questions about:

- Your medicines and risk for interactions
- Alcohol and tobacco use
- Diet and exercise
- Safety, such as seat belt use
- Depression

BREAST EXAMS

Women may do a monthly breast self-exam. However, experts do not agree about the benefits of breast self-exams in finding breast cancer or saving lives. Talk to your doctor about what is best for you.

Contact your doctor right away if you notice a change in your breasts, whether or not you do self-exams.

Your doctor may do a clinical breast exam during your preventive exam. Experts do not agree on the benefit of a breast examination.

MAMMOGRAM

Women up to age 75 should have a mammogram every 1 to 2 years, depending on their risk factors, to check for breast cancer.

Experts do not agree on the benefits of having a mammogram for women age 75 and older. Some do not recommend having mammograms after this age. Others recommend mammography for women in good health. Talk to your provider about what is best for you.

OSTEOPOROSIS SCREENING

All women over age 64 should have a bone density test (DEXA scan).
Ask your provider which exercises can help prevent osteoporosis.

PELVIC EXAM AND PAP SMEAR

After age 65, most women who have not been diagnosed with cervical cancer or precancer can stop having Pap smears as long as they have had 3 negative tests within the past 10 years.

LUNG CANCER SCREENING

The US Preventive Services Task Force recommends annual screening for lung cancer with low-dose computed tomography (LDCT) in adults until age 80 who:

- Have a 30 pack-year smoking history AND
- Currently smoke or have quit within the past 15 years