

# Women's health

Many of the biggest threats to women's health are preventable. Read on to learn about important steps you can take to help yourself be healthy and happy.

## What conditions should I be aware of?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the top causes of death among women in the U.S. include heart disease, stroke, cancer, respiratory disease and Alzheimer's disease.<sup>1</sup> Women are also at an increased risk of developing arthritis, osteoporosis and depression.<sup>2</sup>

Some health issues that affect men and women can affect women differently. For example, women may experience different symptoms of a heart attack than men. While the most common warning sign for women is chest pain, they are somewhat more likely to experience other symptoms like:<sup>3</sup>

- Shortness of breath
- Nausea and vomiting
- Back or jaw pain

Women also face some unique forms of cancer. Common cancers in women include breast, colon, endometrial, lung, cervical, skin and ovarian.

## Follow the path to better health

A healthy life begins with a healthy lifestyle. There are steps you can take each day to help improve or maintain your health, as well as tests and vaccines you should talk to your healthcare team about.

### Every day, try to:

- **Eat a healthy diet.** Choose a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, high-fiber, whole grains and lean sources of protein, like fish and poultry. Limit foods high in saturated fat, added sugar and sodium.
- **Be active.** Exercise may benefit your physical and mental health. Try to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity each day, but talk to your healthcare provider about limitations you may have.
- **Keep a healthy weight.** Losing extra weight—and keeping it off—can help lower your risk of heart disease and cancer.<sup>4</sup>
- **Get plenty of sleep.** Practice healthy sleep habits to help you get at least 7–8 hours of sleep per night.
- **Limit alcohol.** If you drink alcohol, it's important to do so in moderation. For women, that means no more than one drink per day.
- **Get help to quit smoking.** Smoking can contribute to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), heart disease and cancer.<sup>4</sup> The sooner you quit, the better.
- **Stay mentally active.** Get involved in an activity that interests you, such as a book club or taking classes at your local library or senior center. Staying social can help boost brain health and stave off symptoms of depression.
- **Protect your skin.** Limit your time spent in the sun and use a broad-spectrum sunscreen year-round to help prevent skin cancer.

# Women's health

## At least once per year, ask your healthcare provider about...

- **Screenings, tests and vaccines you need.** Keep a record of your screenings (including the results) and immunizations to help you stay on track.
- **Your lifestyle habits.** Share your diet and activity habits with your provider and listen to his/her guidance about steps you can take to help live a healthier life.
- **How to prevent falls.** Tell your provider if you'd had any falls or have felt off balance.
- **Sensitive topics** like urinary incontinence and emotional health concerns. Don't be afraid to ask what you can do to help yourself feel better.

Use the chart below to help you stay up-to-date on screenings and vaccines.<sup>5</sup>

What is it?	What's it for?	How often do I need it?
Physical exam	To check your overall health	Once a year
Blood glucose (sugar)	To check for diabetes	Every 3 years, but you should have your A1c checked at least twice per year if you have diabetes
Blood pressure	To check for hypertension	Every healthcare provider visit
Bone mineral density test	To check for osteoporosis	Ask your healthcare provider
Blood lipid profile (including HDL and LDL cholesterol and triglycerides)	To check for high cholesterol	Every 5 years; more often if directed by your healthcare provider
Mammogram and clinical breast exam	To check for breast cancer	Every 1–2 years, as directed by your healthcare provider
Pap test and pelvic exam	To check for cervical and ovarian cancer	Every 3 years; more often if directed by your healthcare provider
Colonoscopy, sigmoidoscopy and fecal occult blood test	To check for colorectal cancer	Ask your healthcare provider

# Women's health

What is it?	What's it for?	How often do I need it?
<b>Skin exam</b>	To check for skin cancer	Ask your healthcare provider
<b>Eye exam</b>	To check for vision problems like macular degeneration, glaucoma and cataracts	Every 1–2 years
<b>Dental exam</b>	To check for gum and oral diseases	Ask your dentist
<b>Hearing exam</b>	To check for hearing loss, earwax buildup and fluid in the ear	Every 3 years
<b>Flu shot</b>	To help protect against influenza	Once every flu season
<b>Pneumonia shot</b>	To help prevent a respiratory infection	Ask your healthcare provider
<b>Tdap vaccine</b>	To help protect against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis	One dose with a Tdap booster every 10 years
<b>Shingles vaccine</b>	To help prevent shingles	Ask your healthcare provider

## Questions for my doctor

---



---



---



---



---

# Women's health

## References

<sup>1</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr66/nvsr66\\_05.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr66/nvsr66_05.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

[www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/womenshealth/conditioninfo/howconditionsaffect](http://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/womenshealth/conditioninfo/howconditionsaffect)

<sup>3</sup>American Heart Association

[www.heart.org/en/health-topics/heart-attack/warning-signs-of-a-heart-attack/heart-attack-symptoms-in-women#.WuCR8mbrshc](http://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/heart-attack/warning-signs-of-a-heart-attack/heart-attack-symptoms-in-women#.WuCR8mbrshc)

<sup>4</sup>American Academy of Family Physicians

[familydoctor.org/what-you-can-do-to-maintain-your-health/?adfree=true](http://familydoctor.org/what-you-can-do-to-maintain-your-health/?adfree=true)

<sup>5</sup>U.S. Preventive Services Taskforce

[www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/BrowseRec/Index](http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/BrowseRec/Index)

This is for informational purposes only and does not replace treatment or advice from a healthcare professional. If you have questions, please talk with your healthcare provider. Talk to your provider before beginning an exercise program or making any changes to your diet.