

6 Preventive Screenings You Should Never Skip



Health screenings check for signs of disease before you have any symptoms. The earlier your health care provider finds any problems, the easier they are to treat. Here are six screenings you should discuss at your next visit.

1 Blood Pressure

Have your blood pressure checked starting at age 18. Your provider will recommend how frequently you need to get your blood pressure rechecked.

2 Breast Cancer

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommends a mammogram every two years for women ages 50 to 74. Other organizations recommend starting younger. Talk with your health care provider about when you should start receiving mammograms and how often you should get them.

3 Cervical Cancer

A Pap test can find abnormal cervical cells, which your provider can treat, before they become cancer. An HPV test can detect HPV infections that cause cell abnormalities.

The USPSTF recommends women ages 21 to 29 get a Pap test once every three years. Women ages 30 to 65 years can choose one of these options:

- A Pap test every three years
- An HPV test once every five years
- A Pap test and an HPV test once every five years

Women older than 65 who have had normal screenings and do not have a high risk for cervical cancer do not need to be screened.

4 Cholesterol

You should receive a fasting lipoprotein profile—which tests your LDL (“bad”) cholesterol, HDL (“good”) cholesterol and total cholesterol—every four to six years, starting at age 20.

5 Colorectal Cancer

The USPSTF advises getting your first screening for colorectal cancer at age 50. Ask your provider which screening method is best for you. You may need to start getting tested before age 45 or 50 if you’ve had a close family member who had colorectal polyps or colorectal cancer, or if you have inflammatory bowel disease.

6 Diabetes

If you’re age 40 to 70 and overweight or obese, you should have your blood glucose checked. If you’re a healthy weight, you may not need to start blood sugar screenings until age 45.

Sources include the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health and the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force.