

# Specialists and Tests

# FOR WOMEN

by the Decade

As we age, the list of preventative measures necessary to ensure good health into old age grows. Compared to men, women face particularly complicated health issues throughout life – from preparing for pregnancy to transitioning through menopause.

Below is a guide to all the basic health recommendations for a healthy woman in her **20s, 30s, 40s, and 50s**. If you have a family history of disease or suffer from a chronic health issue, your doctor may recommend these tests more often. It's also important to stay vigilant to your body. Contact your doctor if you're concerned about anything that is abnormal for you.

Adhering to these guidelines – in addition to receiving an annual physical examination – won't guarantee perfect health. But it will give you the best chance at detecting a condition early.

## In Your 20s

### Appointment & Screening Schedule:

#### OB/GYN

**Pelvic exams and Pap smears** – every three years if normal, more often if abnormal, to screen for cervical cancer

**STD screenings** – every year that you're sexually active with more than one partner

#### Primary care physician

**Blood pressure tests** – every two years if normal, more often if abnormal

**Cholesterol tests** – every five years if normal, more often if abnormal

**Fasting glucose tests** – every two to three years if normal, more often if abnormal

#### Dermatologist

**Body scan** – once a year (more often if indicated by the doctor) to detect signs of skin cancer

#### Dentist

**Examination and cleaning** – every six months

### Discussion Points:

#### Diet

Be sure to discuss your diet with your primary care doctor, as well as tips on how to maintain a healthy weight.

#### Birth control

Most women at this stage are interested in finding a birth control that is right for them. Ask your OB/GYN which method will best fit your lifestyle and what risks and side-effects are associated with each type.

## In Your 30s

### Appointment & Screening Schedule:

#### OB/GYN

**Pelvic Exams and Pap smears** – every three years (if normal)

**HPV test** – with Pap test, every five years

#### Primary care physician

**Blood pressure, cholesterol and fasting glucose tests** – every two years if normal, more often if abnormal

**Thyroid stimulating hormone test (TSH)** – at age 35, then every few years after that, to check for an underactive or overactive thyroid

#### Dermatologist

**Body scan** – once a year (more often if indicated by the doctor) to detect signs of skin cancer

#### Dentist

**Examination and cleaning** – every six months

### Discussion Points:

#### Babies

More women are waiting until their 30s to conceive. Ask your OB/GYN if you are in proper health to conceive, how to determine when you're ovulating, and what your options are if you have trouble getting pregnant.

#### Vaccinations

Check with your primary care doctor that your immunizations are up-to-date. Your last round of vaccinations may have been when you started college. Every ten years, update your vaccinations for tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis, or whooping cough.

## In Your 40s

### Appointment & Screening Schedule:

#### OB/GYN

**Pelvic Exams and Pap smears** – every three years (if normal)

**HPV test** – with Pap test, every five years

**Mammogram** – the latest recommendation is for women to wait until 45, unless there's a family history of breast cancer. After that, it's recommended every year

#### Primary care physician

**Blood pressure, cholesterol and fasting glucose tests** – every two years if normal, more often if abnormal

**Thyroid stimulating hormone test (TSH)** – at least one time during your 40s, to check for an underactive or overactive thyroid

#### Dermatologist

**Body scan** – once a year (more often if indicated by the doctor) to detect signs of skin cancer

#### Dentist

**Examination and cleaning** – every six months

**Mouth cancer screening** – an examination of your mouth for any signs of possible mouth cancer, which is more likely to strike after age 40

### Discussion Points:

#### Birth control

Some birth control pills can elevate your risk of heart disease or stroke. This may be the time to talk to your OB/Gyn about alternative birth control measures.

#### Bone loss

Peak bone mass is between 25 to 30. Exercise and nutrition will help keep health bone mass at this age.

#### Cancer screenings

This is the age when women will start to develop breast, cervical, ovarian, colon, and endometrial cancer, so gynecological exams every three years and yearly mammograms are essential. Ask your doctor about how to perform a breast self-exam in between annual mammograms.

## In Your 50s

### Appointment & Screening Schedule:

#### OB/GYN

**Pelvic Exams and Pap smears** – every three years (if normal)

**HPV test** – with Pap test, every five years

**Mammogram** – every year. Women over 55 and with no history can switch to once every two years

#### Primary care physician

**Blood pressure, cholesterol and fasting glucose tests** – every two years if normal, more often if abnormal

**Thyroid stimulating hormone test (TSH)** – at least one time during your 50s, to check for an underactive or overactive thyroid

**Bone density test** – if you have risk factors for bone loss, you can start this test in your 50s

#### Dermatologist

**Body scan** – once a year (more often if indicated by the doctor) to detect signs of skin cancer

#### Dentist

**Examination and cleaning** – every six months

**Mouth cancer screening** – an examination of your mouth for any signs of possible mouth cancer, which is more likely to strike after age 40

#### Gastroenterologist

**Colonoscopy** – every ten years; your primary care physician will refer you to a gastroenterologist for a rectal screening

### Discussion Points:

#### Menopause

Be sure to discuss the signs of menopause with your doctor, and whether you should consider hormone replacement therapy or other symptoms.

#### Bone loss

Bone loss starts to speed up after menopause. Although bone density tests are not typically recommended under the age of 60, you may want to discuss with your doctor whether you're at a high risk for osteoporosis and should be tested earlier.

#### Colorectal cancers

Women in their 50s face an increased risk of colorectal cancers. Be sure to discuss your diet and lifestyle with your doctor.