

# Staying Healthy: Recommendations for Women

## What can I do to stay healthy?

The best way to stay healthy is to live a healthy lifestyle. This includes keeping a healthy weight by eating a diet high in fiber, fruits, and vegetables. It also includes exercising for at least 30 minutes a day, five days a week. You should not use tobacco products, and you should not drink more than one alcoholic drink per day.

## Do I need a checkup?

Having a regular checkup can help catch problems early. At your checkup, you and your doctor will talk about your medical history, your family medical history, and risk factors for getting certain diseases. This is also a chance to get recommended vaccinations. You may want to talk to your doctor about preventing pregnancy, getting healthy before pregnancy, menopause, or sexually transmitted infections. If you have felt sad or not interested in things recently, talk to your doctor about depression.

## What kinds of tests will I need?

Your doctor will screen you for risk factors for heart disease. He or she will check your blood pressure and weight, and may check your cholesterol. Your doctor will tell you if you are at a healthy weight by calculating your body mass index (BMI), which is a ratio of your

weight to your height. If your blood pressure is high, your doctor may also check to see if you have diabetes. If you are 65 years or older, your doctor may screen for osteoporosis, which is when your bones get thin and weak.

## Should I be tested for cancer?

Your doctor may test you for some types of cancer. From 21 to 65 years of age, you should be screened for cervical cancer with a Pap test. If the results are normal, you will need a Pap test every three to five years, depending on your age. If your recent Pap test results have been normal and you do not have a history of cervical cancer, you can stop getting Pap tests at 65 years of age. If you have had surgery to take out your uterus, which is called a hysterectomy, you no longer need to get Pap tests.

Your doctor may recommend that you get a mammogram, which is a test that checks for breast cancer. The age when you should start getting mammograms, and the age when you can stop, depends on your risk factors, overall health, and personal preference. Your doctor may want you to get a mammogram as early as 40 years of age. You should have one at least every other year if you are 50 to 74 years of age.

You should get screened for colorectal cancer beginning at 50 years of age. If you have



## Staying Healthy: Recommendations for Women *(continued)*

a family history of colorectal cancer, you may need to start sooner. Different types of tests can be used. Talk to your doctor about which test is right for you.

### Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyLiving/>

Healthfinder.gov

<http://www.healthfinder.gov/prevention>

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

<http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/>

Smokefree.gov

<http://www.smokefree.gov>

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### Notes:

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**This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.**

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