

Annual Health Needs: WOMEN



Annual Physical

See your doctor at least once a year for a physical exam. The exam should check your:

- eyes, ears nose and throat
- lymph nodes -
- nervous system and mental health
- heart, circulation and blood pressure
- lungs
- abdomen (stomach, liver, intestines, etc.)
- bones and joints
- muscles, muscle strength
- skin
- reproductive system

The doctor may also order certain blood tests or X-rays. Blood tests may screen for your cholesterol level and other readings. X-rays may be done if you are having a specific problem. X-rays are not part of a routine exam.

Special Women's Issues

In addition, general physical exams, women have special healthcare needs.

Monthly self-breast exam (screening for breast cancer)

- Pre-menopausal: Perform exam 4-7 days after your period.
- Post-menopausal: Pick a specific day of the month and do it the same time each month.

Annual breast exam by your doctor

Mammogram **every two years** after age 40; **every year** after age 50

Annual Pap Smear (test for cervical cancer)

Discuss **birth control** issues and options that are best for you.

Please note that fertility in females is often not affected by brain and spinal cord injury. This means that if you could become pregnant before your injury, you should think about birth control if you do not want to become pregnant. Types of birth control include:

- Natural family planning (rhythm/mucous method)
- Sterilization (surgical procedure)
- Norplant (minor procedure to implant medicine into arm)
- Intrauterine device (IUD)
- Oral contraceptives ("the pill")
- Spermicides (foam, jelly, cream)
- Diaphragm

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- Cervical cap
- Condom

Pregnancy Care

- Call your doctor as soon as you think you may be pregnant.
- Follow the doctor's visit schedule.
- Stop smoking and using alcohol if you think you are pregnant.

Menopause Care

- Discuss treatment options with your doctor.

Osteoporosis Screening

- Post-menopausal women are at risk for developing osteoporosis, a condition in which calcium and other mineral deficiencies cause bones to become more porous and more easily broken if an accident should occur. Your doctor may order calcium and vitamin D supplements.

Colon Cancer Screening

If needed, you may be screened for colon cancer. This test (colonoscopy or flexible sigmoidoscopy) is done if you have a family history of the disease, are over 50 years old or are having symptoms that would suggest that you need an exam earlier than age 50. For example, if you are experiencing bleeding through your rectum, your doctor may order a stool sample and, if indicated, a colonoscopy.

It is recommended to have a flexible sigmoidoscopy every 3-5 years after two negative exams, or as prescribed by your doctor.

Adult Immunizations

Don't forget your shots! Always check with your doctor first to see if these immunizations are right for you.

Flu shot

- Annually before flu season starts (usually in October)
- Avoid flu shot if you are allergic to egg yolks.

Tetanus/diphtheria -Begin with the full primary series, then follow up with either a booster every 10 years or a single mid-life booster at age 50.

Pneumococcus -Also known as the "pneumonia vaccine" -The vaccine is given once during your lifetime unless otherwise recommended by your doctor.

Traveling Abroad? Please visit this website for immunizations <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>

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Eye Exams

You should have regular eye exams, especially if you wear glasses or contact lenses. Eye exams should be done:

- Every 3-5 years for people ages 20-39 unless otherwise stated by your doctor
- Every 2 years for African Americans over age 40
- Every 2 years for everyone over age 60

Dental Exams

See your dentist for regular exams including preventative care such as teeth cleanings, x-rays, etc. Contact your dentist if you experience toothaches, gum tenderness or other problems in your mouth.