

Feeling Fine? You Still Need Preventive Screenings

Do you feel healthy now? Great! However, you still need preventive screenings because they can find problems early—when they're most treatable. Ask your provider which screenings you should receive. Even if you're young and healthy, they'll likely include the four listed here.



Blood Pressure

Why it matters: High blood pressure increases the risk for heart disease and stroke.

When you need it: The American Heart Association recommends getting your blood pressure checked starting at age 20. If it's normal, you may only need to have it checked every two years.



Cholesterol

Why it matters: Over time, cholesterol can contribute to the narrowing of your arteries and increase your risk for a blood clot, which can lead to a heart attack or stroke.

When you need it: You should have your cholesterol levels checked at age 20 and then again every four to six years.



Body Mass Index

Why it matters: The higher your body mass index (BMI), the greater your risk of developing certain diseases, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some kinds of cancer.

When you need it: A provider likely started checking your BMI during your childhood. If your BMI is in the overweight or obese range, losing just 5 to 10% of your weight can improve your health.



Cervical Cancer

Why it matters: A Pap test checks for precancerous cells on the cervix that could become cervical cancer if left untreated. An HPV test checks for the human papillomavirus, which can cause cell changes that may lead to cervical cancer.

When you need it: Experts offer different recommendations about when to start cervical cancer screenings: age 21 or 25. Talk with your provider about which test—and testing schedule—is right for you.

Sources include the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.