

Routine Healthcare for Men

Routine checkups can find treatable problems early. For many medical problems, early treatment can help prevent more serious problems. The value of checkups and how often you have them depends mainly on your age. Your personal and family medical histories are also important. This summary of routine checkups is intended for people who are feeling healthy and not having any symptoms of illness. If you are having any symptoms that you think may mean a problem, don't wait for your next regular checkup to see your healthcare provider. Get it taken care of right away.

What needs to be checked and how often?

The tests listed below are recommended for routine healthcare by the US Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) or the American Academy of Family Practice (AAFP). They are the minimum checkup recommendations. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about how often you should have a physical exam and how often you need these or other tests.

- **Weight:** At least once a year, preferably each time you visit your provider.
- **Blood pressure measurement:** At least yearly for all men.
- **Cholesterol test.** At least every 5 years starting at age 20.
- **Blood sugar test for type 2 diabetes:** At least once a year if your blood pressure, blood lipids (cholesterol), or weight is high or you have a family history of type 2 diabetes.
- **Colorectal cancer screening:** With 1 of these 3 methods of screening if you are 50 to 75 years old and have an average risk of colon cancer:
 - a fecal occult blood test once a year to check for blood in your stool (bowel movement)
 - a sigmoidoscopy exam every 5 years with fecal occult blood testing at least every 3 years between the 5-year exams
 - a colonoscopy every 10 years.

A special X-ray test called a barium enema may be done every 5 years instead of colonoscopy or sigmoidoscopy. However, there is no evidence that this test is as effective as the tests listed above.

You may need to start colorectal cancer screening earlier if someone in your immediate family has had colon cancer, especially if their cancer occurred before they were 50 years old.

- **Prostate cancer tests:** Healthcare providers may offer a yearly rectal exam and PSA blood test to men age 50 or older. However, the current recommendation is that men age 75 and older do not need to be screened for prostate cancer. Men younger than 75 should discuss the benefits and harms of the PSA test with their healthcare provider before being tested. At this time there is not enough evidence that screening all men is helpful. Sometimes this blood test finds prostate cancer, but it can also cause false-positive results that can lead to unnecessary procedures and surgery. This is why it's important to discuss your personal and family medical history with your provider to see if you should have prostate cancer screening. It is especially important if you are African American because you have a higher risk of developing prostate cancer than other men in the US.

If you are doing the other recommended screenings, a rectal exam is usually helpful only if you are having symptoms that need to be diagnosed, such as rectal bleeding or trouble passing urine.

- **Gonorrhea and syphilis tests:** If you are at high risk for these sexually transmitted infections. This includes having sex with other men or having a new partner, more than 1 partner, a history of sexually transmitted disease (STD), or a

partner with an STD. You are also at risk if you do not use condoms every time you have sex.

- **HIV test for the AIDS virus:** Every year if you are at risk for HIV infection.
- **Tuberculosis (TB) test:** Every year if you have a high risk of TB; for example, because:
 - You are a health worker, drug user, or immigrant.
 - You have diabetes, HIV, or another condition that weakens your immune system.
 - You have close contact with someone infected with TB.
- **Hearing test:** If you are 65 or older.
- **Vision test:** If you are 65 or older.
- **Skin:** If you have any moles or abnormal areas of skin you would like your provider to check.
- **Mouth:** Every year for dental problems and for sores of the gums, especially if you smoke or chew tobacco or if you wear dentures.

You may need other tests as well. You and your healthcare provider need to talk about what is right for you based on your symptoms and your personal and family medical history.

What shots do I need?

The following shots are recommended for adults:

- **Tetanus and diphtheria (Td) booster shot** at least every 10 years. One booster shot should use the Tdap vaccine to protect you better against whooping cough (pertussis) as well as tetanus and diphtheria. Tdap is especially recommended for adults caring for babies because babies are more likely to have complications from whooping cough.
- **Flu shot** every fall.
- **Measles, mumps, and rubella shot (MMR)** if you were born after 1956 unless you have already had the shot or these diseases. Depending on when you had your measles shot, you may need a second one. Ask your healthcare provider.
- **Hepatitis A shot** if:
 - You are at risk, for example, through travel or your job (including military service).
 - You have liver disease.
 - Use illegal drugs.
 - Have HIV.
 - Are a man who has sex with men.
- **Hepatitis B shot** for all adults not yet immunized against hepatitis B.
- **Pneumococcal pneumonia shot** if you are age 65 or older. You may need the shot at a younger age if you have a high-risk medical condition, such as diabetes or lung, kidney, or heart disease, or if you are a smoker. You may need a second pneumonia shot if you got your first shot when you were younger than 65 and it was more than 5 years ago. You should not have more than 2 pneumonia shots in your lifetime.
- **Varicella (chickenpox)** if you have never had chickenpox.
- **Zoster (shingles) vaccine** if you are 60 or older, even if you have already had shingles. The vaccine does not always prevent shingles, but, if you have had the shot and then get shingles, it can reduce the pain caused by the infection.

What other things can I do to stay healthy?

You should expect your healthcare provider to advise you regularly on other ways to stay healthy. Some of these may include:

- **Substance use:** Don't use tobacco or illegal drugs. Avoid using alcohol when you are driving, swimming, boating, or other similar activities. Limit your alcohol to no more than 2 drinks a day.
- **Diet and exercise:** Try to keep your weight at a comfortable, healthy level. Limit unhealthy fats and cholesterol in your diet. Choose healthy fats, such as olive oil. Eat a lot of whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. Get regular exercise according to your healthcare provider's recommendation.
- **Injury prevention:** Use lap and shoulder belts when you drive. Use a helmet when you ride a motorcycle or bicycle. If you are around guns or other firearms, practice safe handling. Make sure to keep all firearms unloaded and in locked cabinets when they are not in use. Install smoke detectors in your home. Set your hot water heater to less than 120°F (49°C). Prevent falls by removing unsafe rugs.
- **Dental health:** Visit your dentist regularly. Brush your teeth with fluoride toothpaste daily. Also floss your teeth daily.
- **Sexual behavior:** Prevent sexually transmitted infections by avoiding high-risk sexual behavior. Use latex or polyurethane condoms every time you have sexual contact unless you are in a long-term relationship with just 1 partner who is not sexually active with anyone else.

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