



Planning for your wellness



**BlueCross
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Federal Employee Program.

Be proactive about your health. You can help prevent serious conditions as you age. Talk with your doctor about what checkups and screenings you need to stay healthy and active, today and in the future.

Why get checkups and screenings?

How often should you get them? Your age, health history, and family health history all play a role in answering these questions. Your doctor can find issues earlier and help prevent more serious problems when you have regular screenings and tests. For example, some serious conditions like diabetes or high blood pressure may not have signs or symptoms that you notice. This makes screenings important. Read on to learn more about which screenings may apply to you. Always talk with your doctor when you have questions about your health needs.

Daily health habits

Taking good care of yourself every day can go a long way in helping you stay healthy. Have you made these health habits a part of your day?

Protect your teeth and gums

Brush your teeth at least twice a day with fluoride toothpaste. Use a soft bristle toothbrush. Floss or water floss your teeth daily. Limit your intake of sugary beverages and snacks. Talk to your dentist about how often you should have your teeth checked and cleaned each year.

Be sure to let your dentist know about:

- The medicines you take
- Your personal and family medical history
- Any changes in your dental health at each visit

Watch your diet and stay active

Stay at a healthy weight. Limit unhealthy fats and salt in your diet. Eat whole grains, fruits and vegetables each day. Do moderate-intensity aerobic activities at least 150 minutes a week or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic activities a week, spread throughout the week. Add muscle strengthening exercises at least 2 days each week. Please talk with your doctor before starting or changing your exercise routine.

Avoid tobacco and limit alcohol

If you use tobacco, ask your doctor or pharmacist for suggestions on how to quit. Limit the amount of alcohol you drink.

Health screenings, tests and exams

The following are some general tips for health screening. Your personal health history will help your doctor decide when you need to start screenings and how often you need them.

Blood pressure

Have your blood pressure checked at a doctor's visit if you are aged 18 or older. Screening at least once a year is suggested for adults aged 40 or older or who have risk factors for high blood pressure. A blood pressure reading of less than 120/80 is considered normal. If your blood pressure is too high, your doctor may ask you to change your diet and activity level. Your doctor may also prescribe medicine to help lower your blood pressure. You may also be asked to check your blood pressure between visits if you have a family history of heart disease, diabetes or other conditions.



Body mass index (BMI)

BMI is calculated based on your weight and height. If your BMI is more than 25, ask your doctor to suggest tips to manage your weight. A BMI over 25 may increase your risk for certain conditions like heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes.

Cholesterol

Talk with your doctor about the risks of high cholesterol. Find out if your cholesterol is too high. Screening is generally recommended for adults aged 40 and older. Your doctor may prescribe a medicine or advise you to change your diet so that you can lower your cholesterol levels.

Colorectal cancer

Tell your doctor about any changes in your bowel pattern lasting more than several weeks. Many experts recommend screenings for adults aged 45 to 75. The decision to screen for colorectal cancer is an individual one for adults aged 76 to 85. How often you get screened depends on your personal health and test results. If you have a family history of colon cancer or polyps, you may need to start screenings at an earlier age. Your doctor may recommend a colonoscopy or other tests to screen for cancer.



Eye exam

Adults with no symptoms or risk factors for eye disease should have a complete eye exam by age 40. Early signs of changes in vision may start at this age, although starting earlier in your 20s and 30s, may be right for you. Your eye doctor may advise you to have follow-up eye exams every one or two years depending on your eye exam results. Wear sunglasses when outdoors to lower the risk of cataracts.

Hepatitis C screening

Hepatitis C is an infection that can damage the liver. One-time screenings are recommended for all adults aged 18 to 79. Talk to your doctor to see if you have been screened for hepatitis C and if you need to be screened in the future.

HIV screening

Screening for HIV infection is for everyone aged 15 to 65. Younger teens and older adults should also be screened if they are at increased risk. HIV screening is recommended for all pregnant people.

Lung cancer

Tell your doctor right away if you have a new persistent cough or signs of blood in your saliva. Ask if a yearly screening for lung cancer is right for you. Some examples of people who may need this screening include those who are:

- Aged 50 to 80 and have a history of heavy smoking (one pack per day for 20 years) and are either still smoking or have quit within the past 15 years

Osteoporosis

Bone density screening is recommended for women age 65 and over. Some health experts also suggest that men consider screening at age 70.

You may need tests earlier based on your health and family history, body build, menopause status, or other health conditions. Ask your doctor about ways to make your bones stronger. For example, you may need to increase your calcium and vitamin D levels through your diet or supplements. Weight-bearing exercises may also help keep your bones strong.

Skin cancer

Skin cancer is caused by too much exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays. You can get skin cancer anywhere on your body. This includes your fingernails and toenails. Protect yourself by wearing sunscreen (some experts recommend using at least SPF 30), UV-light blocking sunglasses and protective clothing like wide-brimmed hats. Check your skin for any changes. Watch for any changes in mole color, shape, or size, and other dark or crusting patches or sores that do not heal. If you see any changes, let your doctor know.

Prediabetes and Type 2 diabetes

Experts recommend all adults be screened for prediabetes and type 2 diabetes starting at age 35. It is also a good idea for younger adults who are overweight or obese, or who have other risk factors for diabetes, be screened. Some of these additional risk factors may include:

- Having high blood pressure
- Have a family history of type 2 diabetes
- Have polycystic ovary syndrome or who had diabetes while pregnant
- Physical inactivity
- Being of African American, Native American, Hispanic/Latino, Pacific Islander, or Asian American descent.

Depression and Anxiety

Mental health is an important part of wellness and it is helpful to continue to talk to your healthcare provider about your mental and emotional well-being. Screening for depression is recommended for all adults. Screening for anxiety disorders is also recommended for adults 64 years or younger.

Healthy pregnancy

Talk with your doctor about what you may need for a healthy pregnancy. This includes:

- Pregnancy planning: Start a daily folic acid supplement at least one month before conception and through months 2 and 3 of the pregnancy. This helps prevent birth defects.
- Gestational diabetes or blood sugar changes related to pregnancy: Most should be screened after 24 weeks of pregnancy.
- Gestational weight: Start healthy diet and exercise practices to maintain a healthy weight throughout your pregnancy. Talk to your doctor about possible counseling options to help with keeping a healthy weight during your pregnancy.

Breast cancer screening

Women aged 40 to 74 should be screened every two years for breast cancer. Ask your doctor about the screening schedule that is right for you. If you have a family history or other health risk factors, your healthcare provider may advise you to have earlier or more frequent screenings.



Cervical cancer screening

Women aged 21 to 29 should be screened every three years for cervical cancer. For women aged 30 to 65, screening is recommended every three to five years depending on the testing methods. Screening schedules and tests may vary depending on age and other health factors. Talk to your doctor to discuss a schedule that is right for you.

Prostate cancer

The decision to screen for prostate cancer is an individual one. Beginning in their 50s, men should discuss the risks and benefits of screening with their doctor before deciding whether to be screened.

Men who may want to discuss with their doctor if they should start screening earlier include those who:

- Have a father or brother who had prostate cancer at an early age
- Are African American

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