

# Health screening guidelines

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## **Blood pressure**

See your doctor for a blood pressure reading:

- Every two years if your blood pressure is less than 120/80 millimeters of mercury (mm Hg)
- Every year if your blood pressure ranges from 120 to 139 mm Hg for the top number (systolic), or 80 to 89 mm Hg for the bottom number (diastolic)
- As often as your doctor recommends if your blood pressure is 140/90 mm Hg or higher

## **What is it?**

During a blood pressure reading, an inflatable cuff is wrapped around your upper arm to measure the amount of pressure your heart generates when pumping blood through your arteries (systolic pressure) and the amount of pressure in your arteries when your heart rests between beats (diastolic pressure).

## **Why?**

Blood pressure readings can detect high blood pressure (hypertension), which increases the risk of heart attack, stroke and other serious health problems.

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## **Cholesterol**

See your doctor for a cholesterol test at least every five years. You may need more frequent screening if you have an abnormal test result.

## **What is it?**

A cholesterol test is a blood test that measures the fats (lipids) in your blood. Usually called a lipid panel, this test typically includes total cholesterol, high-density lipoprotein (HDL), or "good," cholesterol and triglyceride levels.

## **Why?**

A cholesterol test measures the level of cholesterol and triglycerides in your blood. High cholesterol increases the risk of heart attack and stroke, often without causing signs or symptoms.

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By Mayo Clinic Staff

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## Colon and rectal cancer

Ask your doctor about colon and rectal cancer screening if you're at high risk of colon cancer or rectal cancer — if, for example, you have a personal or family history of colon or rectal cancer or polyps or if you have inflammatory bowel disease.

### What is it?

Your doctor may recommend a colonoscopy — an exam that allows the doctor to examine the entire length of your colon by inserting a thin, flexible tube with a tiny video camera at the tip (colonoscope) into your rectum — or another screening test.

### Why?

Colon and rectal cancer screening is used to detect cancer and precancerous growths in the colon and rectum.

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## Dental health

See your dentist for regular checkups — typically once every six months or as recommended by your dentist or hygienist.

### What is it?

During a dental exam, your dentist or hygienist cleans your teeth and evaluates your risk of tooth decay and other oral health problems. The dentist or hygienist also checks your face, neck and mouth for abnormalities.

### Why?

Regular dental exams help protect your oral health.

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## Diabetes

See your doctor for a diabetes screening test every three years if you're at increased risk of diabetes — if, for example, you have high blood pressure, high cholesterol or triglycerides, a family history of diabetes, or a body mass index of 25 or more.

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## **What is it?**

Two blood tests are commonly used to screen for diabetes: A fasting blood sugar test measures the level of sugar (glucose) in your blood after fasting for at least eight hours. An A1C test measures your average glucose level over the last two to three months, by measuring what percentage of your hemoglobin — a protein in red blood cells that carries oxygen — is coated with sugar.

## **Why?**

Diabetes screening can detect high glucose levels, which can cause damage to your heart and circulatory system.

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## **Eye health**

Schedule routine eye exams as recommended by your eye specialist — generally every two to 10 years.

## **What is it?**

During an eye exam, the eye specialist checks your eye movement, side (peripheral) vision, eye pressure, color vision and the sharpness (acuity) of your eyesight.

## **Why?**

An eye exam helps detect eye problems at their earliest stage — when they're most treatable. Regular eye exams also give your eye care professional a chance to help you correct or adapt to vision changes and to provide you with tips on caring for your eyes.

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## **Prostate cancer**

Many men choose to begin regular prostate cancer screening at age 50. Ask your doctor about early prostate cancer screening if you're at increased risk of prostate cancer — if, for example, you have a family history of prostate cancer or you're a black man age 45 or older.

## **What is it?**

Prostate cancer screening may include a digital rectal exam (DRE) and a prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test.

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Prostate cancer screening may include a digital rectal exam (DRE) and a prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test. During a DRE, the doctor inserts a lubricated, gloved finger into your rectum, feels the prostate gland, and checks for any lumps or uneven firmness in the prostate. The PSA test is a blood test that measures the amount of a protein secreted by the prostate gland.

## **Why?**

A DRE can detect prostate enlargement or prostate cancer, and high levels of PSA may indicate prostate cancer.

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## **Weight**

Have your body mass index (BMI) measured at your doctor's office at least every two years.

## **What is it?**

BMI is a formula that uses your weight and height to estimate your body fat.

## **Why?**

Your BMI can help you determine whether you're at a healthy weight or at increased risk of weight-related conditions, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

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