

The 8 Most Important Ways to Stay Healthy and Prevent Disease

1 Don't Smoke. If you do smoke, talk to your primary care provider about quitting. You can also help yourself by following tips on websites (www.smokefree.gov) or talking directly with someone at the National Quitline (1-800-QUITNOW). There are additional resources available at www.healthfinder.gov; search for "smoking" once you've accessed the site. Smoking is a major preventable risk factor that is associated with early death. Common causes are emphysema, lung disease, and heart disease.

2 Be Physically Active. If you are not already physically active, start small and work up to 30 minutes or more of moderate physical activity most days of the week. Walking briskly, mowing the lawn, dancing, swimming, and bicycling are just a few examples of moderate physical activity.

3 Eat a Healthy Diet. Emphasize fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products; include lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts; eat foods low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt, and added sugars.

4 Stay at a Healthy Weight. Balance calories from foods and beverages with calories you burn off by your activities. Check with your primary care provider if you start to gain or lose weight.

5 Drink Alcohol Only in Moderation. If you drink alcohol, have no more than one drink a day. A standard drink is one 12-ounce bottle of beer or wine cooler, one 5-ounce glass of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits.

6 Get The Screening Tests Recommended for You.

BODY MASS INDEX (BMI): Have your body mass index calculated to screen for obesity. BMI is a measure of body fat based on height and weight. You can also

calculate your own BMI by using the BMI calculator on the website for the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (<http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/>).

CHOLESTEROL: Have your cholesterol checked regularly.

BLOOD PRESSURE: Have your blood pressure checked at least every 2 years. High blood pressure is 140/90 or higher. Successful treatment will prevent heart disease and stroke.

BREAST CANCER: Have a mammogram every 1 to 2 years.

CERVICAL CANCER: Have a Pap smear every 1 to 3 years if you have ever been sexually active. If you are older than 65 and recent Pap smears before you turned 65 were normal, you do not need a Pap smear.

COLORECTAL CANCER: Have a test for colorectal cancer. Your doctor can help you decide which test is right for you.

DIABETES: Have a test for diabetes if you have high blood pressure. If you are diabetic, tight glucose control is very important. Maintaining HbA1c less than 7.0 will reduce vascular, heart, and kidney disease as well as blindness and nerve damage.

DEPRESSION: Your emotional health is as important as your physical health. If you have felt "down", sad, or hopeless over the last two weeks or have felt little interest or pleasure in doing things, you may be depressed. Talk to your doctor about being screened for depression.

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS: Talk to your doctor about being tested for sexually transmitted infections.

HIV: Have a test to screen for HIV if any of these apply:

- You have had unprotected sex with multiple partners

- You have used or now use injection drugs
- You exchange sex for money or drugs or have sex partners who do
- You have past or present sex partners who are HIV-infected, are bisexual, or use injection drugs
- You are being treated for sexually transmitted diseases
- You had a blood transfusion between 1978 and 1985.

OSTEOPOROSIS (Thinning of the Bones): Have a bone density test beginning at age 65 to screen for osteoporosis. If you are between the ages of 60 and 64 and weigh 154 pounds or less, talk to your doctor about being tested. You may have to have this test again after 2 or more years.

7 Take Preventive Medications If You Need Them.

ASPIRIN: Ask your doctor about taking aspirin to prevent stroke.

BREAST CANCER DRUGS: If your mother, sister, or daughter has had breast cancer, talk to your doctor about whether you should take medicines to prevent breast cancer.

ESTROGEN USE FOR MENOPAUSE (Hormone Replacement Therapy): Do not use estrogen for the prevention of cardiovascular disease or other diseases. Talk to your doctor if you need relief from the symptoms of menopause.

8 Stay Up-to-Date with Your Immunizations. You need a flu shot every year. You can prevent other serious diseases such as pneumonia, whooping cough, and shingles by being vaccinated. Talk with your primary care provider about the vaccines you need and when you need them.

Sources: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) Fact Sheet "Women: Stay Healthy at 50+ – Checklists for Your Health", based on research findings from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF).