Why Preventive Care?

Take charge of your most valuable asset—your health! Many conditions can be reversed and cancers have high survival rates if found early. That’s what makes prevention and overall awareness critically important.

Seven out of ten U.S. deaths are attributed to conditions related to chronic disease. Research shows that 50% of the U.S. population have a chronic illness such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, or other conditions that are classified as preventable. Screening and prevention are key and should be an important part of your health and wellness plan.

What we know is:
- Routine cardiovascular exams save more than ten thousand adult lives each year
- Vaccinations save about 4,200 children annually
- Life expectancy is increased with preventive care

Source: CDC, Healthy People 2020

For More Information

U.S. Development of Health and Human Services, Office on Women’s Health
www.womenshealth.gov
Women have unique health issues. And some of the health issues that affect both men and women can affect women differently.

Unique issues include pregnancy, menopause, and conditions of the female organs. Women can have a healthy pregnancy by getting early and regular prenatal care. They should also get recommended breast cancer, cervical cancer and bone density screenings.

Women and men also have many of the same health problems. But these problems can affect women differently. For example:

- Women are more likely to die following a heart attack than men
- Women are more likely to show signs of depression and anxiety than men
- The effects of sexually transmitted diseases can be more serious in women
- Osteoarthritis affects more women than men
- Women are more likely to have urinary tract problems

Unique conditions and issues specific to women:

- Gynecological health, disorders and cancers
- Pregnancy issues and disorders related to infertility
- Osteoporosis
- Violence against women
- Menopause

Source: USDHHS and NIH

### BREAST CANCER

**Early Detection is Key**

Breast cancer is the second most common type of cancer for women, affecting about one out of every 10 women. It occurs most often in women over 50 years old. The good news is that it is nearly completely curable if found and treated in its earliest stages.

- Women discover 80% of breast lumps themselves.
- Mammograms can detect tumors up to two years before they are found in physical exams.

### Risk Factors

- A family history of breast cancer
- Started menstruating before age 12
- You are over the age of 30 and have never given birth to a child
- You consume alcohol excessively
- You had menopause after age 55

### Prevention and Early Detection

A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast that helps your doctor detect cancer in its earliest stages when a lump is too small to be felt during a normal breast self-exam. A “baseline” mammogram at age 35 provides your doctor with an image of your cancer-free breast to compare with future mammograms to identify changes. Women over 40 should have a mammogram every year.

Breast self-exams should be performed monthly for women 20 and over. Professional breast exams should be done every three years up to age 40, then every year at the same time as the mammogram.

**Lifestyle Prevention:** Reduce your risk of breast cancer with a healthy lifestyle.

- Limit intake of alcoholic beverages to one drink a day at most
- Eat a diet rich in fruits and vegetables
- Be physically active
- Maintain a healthy weight

### CERVICAL CANCER

**Pap Tests Save Lives**

In the fight against cervical cancer, the Pap test has been a lifesaver. Infection with the sexually transmitted virus human papillomavirus (HPV) is thought to cause nearly all cases.

The death rate from cervical cancer has dropped 70% since the Pap test was introduced in the 1940s. When found and treated early, cervical cancer can be cured in almost 100% of cases.

### Risk Factors

- Sexual activity at an early age
- Multiple sexual partners
- Multiple pregnancies
- History of herpes, genital warts, or other sexually transmitted diseases
- Your mother took the drug DES while pregnant with you

**Prevention and Early Detection**

Pap tests are done in the doctor’s office as the woman lies on the exam table. The procedure is painless and quick. The doctor takes a sample of cells from the cervix with a wooden scraper. The cells are sent to a lab where they’re examined for abnormality. Women should have an annual Pap test and pelvic examination starting at age 21—or earlier if they are sexually active.

**Recommendations for health screenings change frequently as more and more is learned about overall good health. If you have any questions about the type of screenings that you should get, check with your health care provider or visit www.ahrq.gov.**