

7 Screening Tests for Women

May is the month when many women celebrate Mother's Day. Maybe breakfast in bed, homemade cards, extra hugs....? It's pretty wonderful to feel so cared for. But how well do you take care of *yourself*—whether or not you're a mother?

One big piece of self-care involves regular screening tests, which can prevent many health problems—or help you nip them in the bud as early as possible. Life can get hectic, though, so it's easy to forget or to put it off. Here is a brief overview of the tests the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends for women. Remember: these are guidelines only. Talk with your doctor about your unique needs.

1. Blood pressure test. Starting at age 18:

- Get tested at least every 2 years if your blood pressure is lower than 120/80.
- Get tested once a year if your blood pressure is between 120/80 and 139/89.
- Discuss treatment with your doctor if your blood pressure is 140/90 or higher.

2. Bone mineral density test.

- At age 50, ask your doctor if you are at risk for bone disease (osteoporosis).
- At age 65 or older, have at least one bone mineral density test. Ask your doctor whether you need repeat testing.

3. Breast cancer screening.

- At age 40, discuss your risk with your doctor to decide if you need regular mammograms.
- Starting at age 50, have a mammogram every 2 years.
- At age 75, ask your doctor whether or not you need to be screened.

4. Cervical cancer screening.

- Starting at age 21, get a Pap test every 3 years if you have a cervix.
- Starting at age 30, you can get a Pap test and human papillomavirus (HPV) test together every 5 years if you have a cervix.
- At age 65 or older, ask your doctor whether or not you need a Pap test.

5. Cholesterol test. Starting at age 20, get a regular cholesterol test if you are at increased risk for heart disease. Ask your doctor how often to do this.

6. Colorectal cancer screening. From age 50 to 75, get screened for colorectal cancer. This may include one or more tests, such as fecal occult blood testing, sigmoidoscopy, or colonoscopy. Ask your doctor which test is best for you and how often you need it.

7. Diabetes screening.

Starting at age 18, get screened if your blood pressure is higher than 135/80 or if you take high blood pressure medicine.

In addition, if you're sexually active, ask your doctor whether or not you need any special tests.

What if one of the tests above reveals that you have a health condition? You might feel overwhelmed by a new diagnosis. Many people do. We can offer you private consultations and a wide range of resources to help you manage what's ahead. For example, if you need to monitor your blood pressure at home, you can find blood pressure kits for sale right here. Or if you need help managing any drug interactions, we can work with your doctor to find better options for you. Don't forget: Health Mart is with you each step of the way.

Nothing herein constitutes medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, or is a substitute for professional advice. You should always seek the advice of your physician or other medical professional if you have questions or concerns about a medical condition.

Sources:

1. OWH: "Screening tests for women." Available at: <http://www.womenshealth.gov/screening-tests-and-vaccines/screening-tests-for-women/> Accessed 4-2-16.