

Your Care Instructions

Physical examinations can help you stay healthy. Your doctor has checked your overall health and may have suggested ways to take good care of yourself. They also may have recommended tests. At home, you can help prevent illness with healthy eating, regular exercise and other steps.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor or nurse call line if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Reach and stay at a healthy weight — this will lower your risk for many problems, such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure.
- Try to do moderate to vigorous activity 2½ hours a week. It's fine to be active in blocks of 10 minutes or more throughout your day and week. Walking is a great option. You also may want to do other activities, such as running, swimming, cycling, playing tennis or team sports.
- Do not smoke. Smoking can make health problems worse. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about stop-smoking programs and medicines.
- Protect your skin from too much sun. Stay in the shade or cover up with a wide-brimmed hat and tightly woven clothing when outdoors from 11 a.m.–3 p.m. Wear UV-blocking sunglasses, and put broad-spectrum sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher) on any exposed skin, even when it's cloudy.
- See a dentist one or two times a year for checkups and to have your teeth cleaned.
- Wear a seat belt in the car.

Follow your doctor's advice about when to have certain tests. These tests can spot problems early:

- **Cholesterol.** Your doctor will tell you how often to have this done based on your age, family history or other things that can increase your risk for heart disease.
- **Blood pressure.** Have your blood pressure checked during a routine doctor visit. Your doctor will tell you how often to check your blood pressure based on your age, your blood pressure results and other factors.

- **Mammogram.** Ask your doctor how often you should have a mammogram, which is an X-ray of your breasts. A mammogram can spot breast cancer before it can be felt and when it is easiest to treat.
- **Pap test and pelvic examination.** Ask your doctor how often you should have a Pap test.
- **Vision.** Have your eyes checked every year or two or as often as your doctor suggests. Some experts recommend that you have yearly examinations for glaucoma and other age-related eye problems starting at age 50.
- **Hearing.** Tell your doctor if you notice any change in your hearing. You can have tests to find out how well you hear.
- **Diabetes.** Ask your doctor whether you should have tests for diabetes.
- **Colorectal cancer.** Your risk for colorectal cancer gets higher as you get older. Experts say that most adults should start regular screening at age 50 and stop at age 74. If you are at higher risk, your doctor may recommend you start screening before age 50 or continue after age 74. Talk with your doctor about your risk and when to start and stop screening.
- **Thyroid disease.** Some doctors recommend that you have thyroid screening if you have a personal or family history of thyroid problems or other autoimmune diseases. Talk to your doctor about whether to have your thyroid checked as part of a regular physical examination. Women have an increased chance of a thyroid problem.
- **Osteoporosis.** You should begin tests for bone density at age 65. If you are younger than 65, ask your doctor whether you have factors that may increase your risk for this disease. You may want to have this test before age 65.
- **Coronary artery disease.** Every 1 to 3 years, you should have your risks for heart disease assessed. This test uses factors such as your age, blood pressure, cholesterol and whether you smoke or have diabetes to show what your risk for a heart attack is over the next 10 years.

When should you call for help?

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor or nurse call line if you have any problems or symptoms that concern you.

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information, call Health Link at 811.

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