

Healthy Practices For Women

In addition to your periodic preventive care visits with your primary care provider, we recommend the following list of "healthy practices." Modifying your daily activities according to these recommendations may improve your overall health and well-being. If you have any questions about these recommendations, talk with your primary care provider (PCP).

DIET & EXERCISE

- *Nutrition:* Eat fruits, grains, and vegetables. Limit fat and cholesterol.
- *Calcium:* Pre-menopausal women require at least 1000 mg per day of calcium (through calcium-rich foods, dairy products and/or calcium supplements). After menopause, calcium requirements increase to 1500 mg per day (or 1000 mg per day for those women using hormone replacement therapy). For all women, Vitamin D is recommended (400 I.U./day) in order to help with the absorption of calcium.
- *Folate (folic acid) supplementation* (400 micro- grams per day) is recommended for at least three months before considering pregnancy. Foods rich in folate include orange juice, spinach, asparagus, broccoli and other legumes.
- *Aerobic, weight-bearing exercise* is recommended for 30 minutes at least three times per week. Modest activity to total 30 minutes per day may be substituted for the aerobic activity above if total activity is at least 30 minutes per day on most days of each week. Consider weight training.

PHYSICAL EXAMS

- The time interval between routine physical examinations varies, depending on your age.
- Routine gynecological exams (including a Pap smear to screen for cervical cancer) are recommended if sexually active or by age 21. In general, an exam is recommended on a yearly basis, though this may vary based on sexual history.

INJURY PREVENTION

- Seatbelts should be worn at all times when in a moving car.
- Helmets should be worn when using motorcycles, bicycles, rollerblades or during other sports where head injury is possible.
- Smoke detectors should be in every home. Batteries should be changed frequently.
- Guns must be stored unloaded in a locked area.

DENTAL HEALTH

- Schedule regular visits (every 6 months) with the dentist.
- Brush with fluoride toothpaste and floss regularly.

BREAST HEALTH

- Breast self-exam should be performed monthly.
- A baseline mammogram should be done between the ages of 35 and 40, then every one to two years until age 50 based on risk factors. Mammograms should be done on a yearly basis after the age of 50. If there is a strong family history of breast cancer occurring at an early age, a mammogram may be recommended prior to the age of 35.

SEXUAL HEALTH

- Not all women are sexually active.
- If you are sexually active with men, are of child-bearing age, and do not wish to be pregnant, use an effective form of contraception with every act of intercourse. The regular use of condoms helps to prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. Condoms should also be used during oral and anal sex.

- Emergency contraception (the "morning after pill") is available in the event of a contraceptive failure.
- If you are sexually active with other women, avoid contact with your partner's bodily fluids and consider the use of a barrier such as a dental dam or plastic food wrap during oral sex.
- Consider HIV testing.
- Hepatitis B vaccine is recommended for sexually active women, particularly those with multiple sexual partners.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

- Stop smoking
- Limit alcohol, and avoid its use when driving, boating, swimming, or operating machinery.
- Do not use recreational drugs (eg, marijuana, cocaine, etc). Even occasional use can be dangerous.

IMMUNIZATIONS

- *Tetanus Booster:* A tetanus booster is recommended every ten years. For those women who completed the tetanus series in childhood, and received a booster during early adulthood, a single midlife booster at the age of 50 is sufficient.
- *Pneumococcal Pneumonia Vaccine:* This vaccine is indicated for women age 65 and older. It is recommended at an earlier age for women with certain chronic diseases.
- *Flu Vaccine:* Influenza (flu) vaccine is recommended yearly for women age 65 and older, or at any age based on medical history and possible exposure.
- Before considering pregnancy, you should check your Rubella status and chicken pox (varicella) status if you do not have a documented history of the chicken pox.
- *HPV Vaccine:* This new vaccine is recommended for females age 9 through 26. This vaccine helps protect against diseases caused by Human Papillomavirus (HPV), one of the most common STIs in the United States.

SCREENING

- *Cholesterol Screening:* Maintaining a desirable cholesterol level decreases the risk of heart disease. A screening cholesterol test should be done by the age of 20.
- *Osteoporosis Screening:* Women who are postmenopausal are at risk for osteoporosis. Other risk factors for osteoporosis include race (increased risk in Caucasian and Asian women), thin build, family history of osteoporosis, smoking, sedentary lifestyle, alcohol abuse, smoking, and certain medications (particularly steroids and thyroid hormones). Consider a bone density test.
- *Colon Cancer Screening:* Colon cancer screening should be initiated at the age of 50 (sooner if there is a family history of colon cancer). This involves checking the stool for microscopic bleeding.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- If you are currently in a relationship where you feel threatened or unsafe, please discuss your situation with your health care provider or call Alternatives for Battered Women at (585) 232-7353. Help is available.

SCHEDULING AN APPOINTMENT

The University Health Service offers a full-range of women's health care services. Call 275-2662 to schedule an appointment.