Healthy Practices for Women

Preventive Care Visits/Physical Exams
- These will include a review of your health history, a physical examination, and laboratory tests as needed.
- Routine preventive care visits are recommended (and covered by most insurance plans) as follows:
  - Every five years through the age of 39;
  - Every three years between 40-49;
  - Every two years between 50-59; and
  - Every year starting at age 60.
- Routine gynecological exams (including a Pap test to screen for cervical cancer) are recommended at the age of 21. The frequency of subsequent Pap test varies and should be discussed with your health care provider.

Diet and Exercise
- Eat a varied diet, emphasizing whole grains, fruits and vegetables.
- Limit saturated fats.
- 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).
- Vitamin D: Recommended (1000 I.U. per day) for all women in order to help with the absorption of calcium.
- Folate (folic acid) supplementation (400 micrograms per day): Recommended for at least three months before considering pregnancy. Foods rich in folate include orange juice, spinach, asparagus, broccoli, and 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.

Heart Disease Prevention
- Know your blood pressure. It should be below 120/80.
- Know your cholesterol.
- Maintain a healthy body weight by following diet and exercise guidelines above.

Immunizations
- A Tetanus booster is recommended every ten years
- A Tdap booster (tetanus/diphtheria/acellular pertussis) is recommended once in adulthood to help protect against the whooping cough.
- Before considering pregnancy, you should check your Rubella status and chicken pox (varicella) status (if you do not have a documented history of chicken pox).
- Pneumococcal pneumonia vaccine is indicated for women age 65 and older. It is recommended at an earlier age for women with certain chronic diseases including asthma, chronic lung and heart problems.
- HPV vaccine is recommended for women ages 11-26.
- Zostavax (the “shingles” vaccine) is recommended for women over age 60.
- Hepatitis B vaccine is recommended for teens, young adults and health care professionals.
- Influenza vaccine is recommended annually.

Injury Prevention
- Seatbelts should be worn at all times when in a moving vehicle.
- Avoid distracted driving (texting, use of cell phones and other electronic devices).
- 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.
**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, also called Plan B or the “morning after pill,” is available in the event of a contraceptive failure. If you are over age 18, you can purchase Plan B without a prescription. Plan B is available for purchase at UHS offices.
- If you are sexually active with 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.
- Hepatitis B vaccine is recommended for all sexually active women, particularly those with multiple sexual partners.
- The HPV 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 sexually transmitted infections (STI) in the United States.
- Consider HIV testing. HIV testing is available at UHS. Ask your UHS primary care provider (PCP) about testing.

**Osteoporosis Screening**
- Women who are postmenopausal are at risk for osteoporosis.
- Consider a bone density test at the age of 65 (sooner for some high-risk women).

**Colon Cancer Screening**
- Colon cancer screening should begin at the age of 50 (sooner if there is a family history of colon cancer).
- Many different screening tests are available including colonoscopy, sigmoidoscopy, and the test of stool for microscopic blood.

**Breast Cancer Screening**
- A baseline mammogram should be done starting between the ages of 35 and 40 and then every one to two years until age 50. 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.

**Mental Health**
- Regular exercise and open communication with family and friends can help maintain good mental health.
- Feel free to discuss any prolonged feelings of anxiety, depression, or other concerns with your primary care provider (PCP).

**Substance Abuse**
- Do not smoke or use tobacco in any other way! Ask your PCP if you have any questions about how to quit.
- Limit alcohol (0-1 drink per day) and avoid its use when driving, boating, swimming, or operating machinery.
- Do not use recreational drugs (e.g., marijuana, cocaine, etc.). Even occasional use can be dangerous.

**Intimate Partner Abuse**
- Please do not remain silent if you feel threatened or abused by someone you know or love.
- Discuss these concerns with your primary care provider (PCP).

**Health Care Proxy**
- Consider appointing a health care proxy. This allows you to appoint someone you trust to make health care decisions for you if you should lose the ability to make decisions yourself.
- By appointing a health care agent, you can make sure that health care providers follow your wishes.

Feel free to discuss any of the recommendations above with your primary care provider.
To schedule an appointment with your UHS primary care provider, call 585-275-2662.