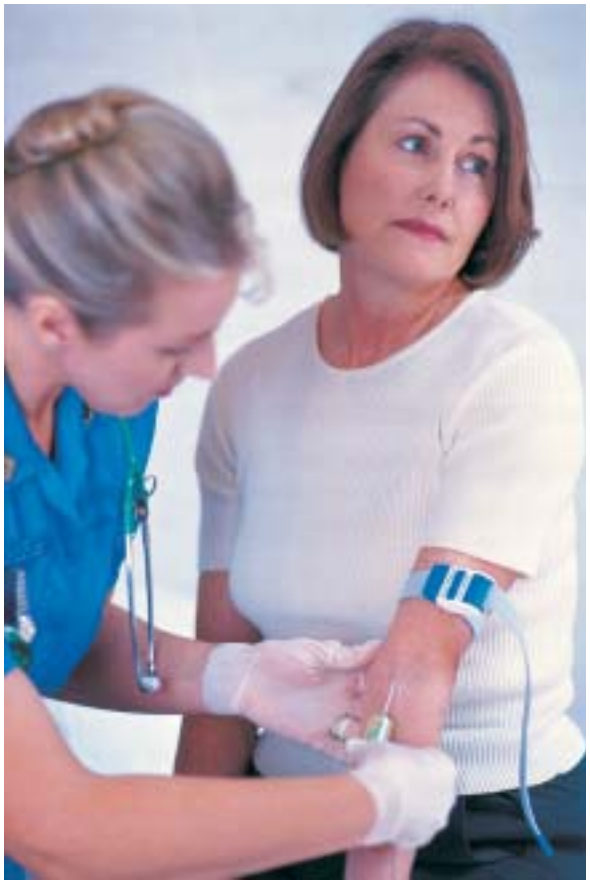
Women's Health



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Exams for staying healthy

Staying healthy is a combination of factors–a healthy diet, lots of physical activity, a happy life and regular checkups

AIDS Hotline:
1-800-342-AIDS

American Council on Alcoholism:
1-800-527-5344
www.aca-usa.org

U.S. Dept. of Health
Alcohol and Drug Info
1-800-729-6686
www.health.org

Women's Health
www.womens-health.com

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK

Test	Frequency
Blood pressure	every one to two years
Breast exams	monthly self exams; annual physician exam
Mammography	after age 40, every one to two years
Cholesterol levels	every five years after age 18
Pelvic exams/Pap smears	every one to three years after age 18 or when sexually active
Rectal exams	annually over age 50
Blood sugar levels	varies, depending on family history, personal risk factors for diabetes
Skin exams	annual mole checks; self inspection for suspicious growths
Dental exams	twice a year for checkup and cleaning
HIV test	if you had a blood transfusion between 1978 and 1985, have injected illegal drugs, have had multiple sexual partners or have had sex with a man who had additional sex partners
Syphilis, gonorrhea or chlamydia tests	if you have had multiple sexual partners or any sexually transmitted diseases
Tuberculosis test	if you have injected illegal drugs, have been an alcoholic or a health care worker, have been exposed to someone with tuberculosis, have recently moved from Asia, Africa, Central or South America, or the Pacific Islands, or if you have kidney failure or HIV infection

Early detection of breast cancer

Signs and symptoms of breast cancer

The earliest sign of breast cancer is an abnormality that shows up on a mammogram before it can be felt by a woman or by her health care provider. Some physical signs and symptoms of breast cancer include a breast lump, thickening, swelling, distortion, tenderness, skin irritation, dimpling, pain, scaliness, ulceration or retraction of the breast. Breast pain is commonly due to benign conditions and is not usually the first symptom of breast cancer.

The benefits of mammography

Mammography is especially valuable as an early detection tool because it can identify breast cancer at an early stage before physical symptoms develop. Numerous studies have shown that early detection saves lives and increases treatment options. The declines in breast cancer mortality have been attributed, in large part, to the regular use of screening mammography.

The American Cancer Society recommends that women age 40 and older have an annual mammogram, an annual clinical breast examination by a health care professional (close to and preferably before the scheduled mammogram), and perform monthly breast self-examination. Women ages 20 to 39 should have a clinical breast examination by a health care professional every three years and should perform breast self-examination monthly.

Regular self-exams

When examining your breasts, look in the mirror for breast changes. Stand in three positions: first one arm, then the other, over your head, arms placed at your sides and then hands on hips with chest muscles squeezed. Squeeze each nipple gently to check for discharge.

Lie on your back with a pillow under your left shoulder, left arm behind your head. With your right hand, circle the outside of the left breast, feeling for lumps. Then switch and check the right breast.

In the shower, raise right arm over your head and check right breast with left hand then switch. If you find anything unusual during your self-exam, contact your health care provider right away.

Breast cancer facts

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women, other than skin cancer. It is the second leading cause of cancer death in women, after lung cancer.

About 211,240 women in the United States will be found to have invasive breast cancer in 2005. About 40,410 women will die from the disease this year. Right now there are slightly over 2 million women living in the US who have been treated for breast cancer.

The chance of a woman having invasive breast cancer some time during her life is about 1 in 7. The chance of dying from breast cancer is about 1 in 33.

Reducing your Cancer risk

- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables and limit high-fat foods
- Be physically active and maintain a healthy body weight
- Limit consumption of alcoholic beverages
- Don’t smoke
- Always wear sunscreen

Breast cancer risk factors

Online Health Reminders

Experts agree that the sooner cancer is discovered, the greater the chance of successful treatment. It's easy to forget to schedule an appointment for a regular cancer screen, but now there's a handy way to remember. A website created by the College of American Pathologists, **MyHealthTestReminder.com**, sends reminders by e-mail about Pap exams, colon exams or mammograms, as well as providing information about the various exams.

To sign up for this service, simply visit **MyHealthTestReminder.com**, choose which screening reminder you would like to receive and enter your e-mail address. Then at the appropriate time, you'll receive an e-mail reminding you to call your health care provider and schedule an appointment. It's a simple way to stay one step ahead of cancer.

Risk factors

A family history of breast cancer, early menstruation, late menopause and obesity after menopause have all been linked to a higher incidence of breast cancer. The risk increases with age. Additionally, women who have never had children or had a first child after age 30 and women who have been exposed to radiation have an increased risk. The recent use of oral contraceptives or postmenopausal estrogens and progestin can create an increased risk, as can consumption of alcohol. Caucasian women have a higher incidence compared to African-American women. However, the incidence is increasing among African-American women under age 60.

Tests available

- ***Mammogram:*** a basic x-ray of the breast
- ***Ultrasound:*** an image is created with sound waves. The image allows doctors to distinguish between fluid-filled lumps (usually benign) and solid lumps (sometimes cancerous)
- ***Biopsy:*** removal of cells, fluid or tissue from the breast for further testing

Resources for more information

- Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, 1-800-462-9273 www.komen.org
- American Cancer Society, 1-800-227-2345 www.cancer.org

Heart Disease

One in ten American women age 45 to 64 has some form of heart disease. The rate increases to one in four women over age 65.

These numbers are especially distressing because the symptoms of heart disease in women are more likely to be brushed off as something *other* than a heart attack.

What is different about women and heart disease?

The symptoms women experience when having a heart attack are often very different from what is called the "male model" of a heart attack. Heart disease is underrecognized, underdiagnosed and undertreated by women patients and by some physicians.

Symptoms of heart attacks in women include:

- shortness of breath
- pain in the abdomen, in the back, in the jaw or in the throat
- a sensation of uneasiness or feeling "sick" that is difficult to describe
- other "traditional" symptoms, including chest pain

Risk Factors

- age
- family history
- diabetes
- race—African-American women have the greatest risk of heart disease of any gender or ethnic group, with heart disease as their number one cause of death after age 25
- high cholesterol levels
- smoking
- high blood pressure
- lack of physical activity
- obesity, particularly in the stomach area

Resources for more information

American Heart Association, 1-800-AHA-USA1
Indiana Heart Association, (317) 876-4850, 1-800-229-1503
Women's Health Information, 1-888-MY-HEART
www.womensheartinstitute.com/

- Heart disease is the number one killer of women.

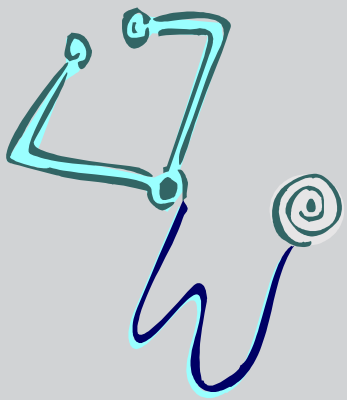
- 42% of all deaths in Indiana are caused by heart disease, almost double the number of deaths caused by AIDS, cancer and all accidents combined.

- Cardiovascular disease costs the United States about $274.2 billion annually.

Keys to prevention

- Eat a healthy diet
- Exercise

Cervical Cancer



New cases:

Worldwide, cervical cancer affects over 400,000 women and, behind breast cancer, is the most common malignancy in women.

Deaths:

In the United States, 12,200 women will develop and 4,100 women will die from cervical cancer this year alone.

Prevention:

The risk for cervical cancer is closely linked to sexual behavior and to sexually transmitted infections with certain types of human papilloma virus. Women who have sex at an early age, many sexual partners, or have partners who have had many sexual partners are at a higher risk of developing the disease. Cigarette smoking is another factor associated with cervical cancer.

Screening test for the early detection of cervical cancer:

The Pap Test is a simple procedure that can be performed by a health care professional as part of a pelvic exam. A small sample of cells is collected from the cervix, transferred to a slide, and examined under a microscope. Pap smears detect abnormalities in the cells of the cervix, thus alerting the physician that further tests may need to be done. Early detection allows treatment to begin before cancer has actually developed. This test should be performed annually with a pelvic exam in women who are, or have been, sexually active or who have reached age 18. After three or more consecutive annual exams with normal findings, the Pap Test may be performed less frequently at the discretion of a physician.

Any questions about cervical cancer should be directed to your gynecologist or to your family doctor.

Other sources:

The American Cancer Society - *www.cancer.org*

The National Cervical Cancer Coalition - *www.nccc-online.org*

Osteoporosis

What is osteoporosis? This is a disease that causes a loss of bone mass and deterioration of bone tissue, leading to enhanced bone fragility and an increase in the risk of fracture. This bone loss can be extensive. Osteoporosis often progresses painlessly until a bone breaks, usually in the hip, spine or wrist. Women are four times more likely than men to develop the disease, mainly due to the loss of estrogen at menopause. Half of all women over age 65 are affected by osteoporosis.

Am I at risk for osteoporosis?
Those at highest risk are women who:

- are small and have thin body frames
- have suffered a broken bone after age 40
- are postmenopausal
- have inactive lifestyles with little or no exercise
- are Caucasian or Asian
- weigh less than average for their height
- have early menopause
- have a family history of osteoporosis
- have a diet low in calcium and vitamin D
- have a diet high in caffeine, alcohol or protein
- have hormonal conditions like diabetes, hyperthyroid or Cushing's disease
- smoke
- take thyroid or cortizone medications

Remember, living a healthy lifestyle, including weight-bearing exercise, can significantly reduce one's risk for osteoporosis, but a healthy lifestyle alone will not be enough for many women.

Dealing with the negative effects of reduced estrogen may require other options to be determined by each woman and her physician. Don't be afraid to speak to your health care provider.

Tips for Prevention

Osteoporosis is more common than it should be. Although we don't know how to completely stop bone loss, we can take steps to prevent many of the fractures. Although some women will undoubtedly have osteoporosis, the majority of women can take some of the following steps to help in the prevention of osteoporosis.

•Drink lots of milk

•Eat foods rich in calcium, such as yogurt, cheese and ice cream

•Don't smoke

•Limit alcoholic beverages

•Do weight-bearing exercise, such as walking, hiking and stair climbing

Depression

Common symptoms:

- Too much sleep or difficulty sleeping
- Change in appetite—either eating too much or not enough
- Change in level of energy
- Disinterested in things that used to interest you
- Interference with your ability to think, inability to focus
- Negative thinking

Nearly two-thirds of depressed people do not get appropriate treatment because their symptoms:

- Are not recognized
- Are blamed on personal weakness
- Are so disabling that the people affected cannot reach out for help
- Are misdiagnosed and wrongly treated as medical problems

Helping the depressed person

If you suspect that someone you care about is depressed, encourage him or her to seek treatment. Offer emotional support and engage the depressed person in conversation and listen carefully. Do not ignore remarks about suicide.

Depression affects women almost twice as often as men

Depression is a disease

Depression is an emotional state in which the patient has extreme feelings of sadness, dejection and emptiness.

In many people, depression is triggered by an unhappy or stressful event, such as the death of a relative or difficulties at home, school or work. Prolonged illness, drug usage and alcohol intoxication may also trigger depression.

During any one-year period, 17.6 million American adults suffer from a depressive illness. Depression is a psychological condition that changes how you think and feel. Depression also affects your social behavior and sense of physical well-being.

Feelings of sadness, tiredness or discouragement which pass within a few days or weeks are not depression. But, if these feelings linger, intensify and begin to interfere with work, school or family responsibilities it may be depression.

Depression can affect anyone. Once identified, most people with depression are successfully treated. Unfortunately, depression is not always diagnosed, because many of the symptoms mimic physical illness, such as sleep and appetite disturbances. Recognizing depression is the first step in treating it.

Helping yourself

Psychotherapy is designed to change the negative thinking associated with depression.

In the meantime:

- Set small goals for yourself
- Do what you can as you can to prevent yourself from feeling overwhelmed
- Spend time with others
- Force yourself to participate in activities that may make you feel better
- Get help from a professional—no matter how much you want to beat it yourself, a psychologist can help you recover faster

Other sources:

www.healingwell.com/depression
www.depression-screening.org

Tips for a healthy pregnancy

Once you have confirmed you are pregnant, continue taking prenatal vitamins. Follow a healthy diet and exercise regularly. You may experience fatigue, nausea and frequent urination in the first several months. Call your doctor if you experience cramping, spotting or bleeding, which may indicate early miscarriage; lower abdominal pain, continual vomiting, gushing or steady leaking of fluid from vagina, painful or sparse urination.

As you ease into your second trimester, you will begin to show. Around this time morning sickness usually subsides and your appetite increases. You only need about 300 extra calories per day. You also will start to experience fetal movement, lower abdominal achiness, backache, leg cramps, indigestion and bloating. Call your doctor if you notice an absence of fetal movement for more than 12 hours.

Once you enter the third trimester, you may experience disrupted sleep due to the difficulty of finding a comfortable position. You may begin to experience shortness of breath, scattered "Braxton-Hicks contractions" and varicose veins. Support panty hose may help ease discomfort. You may notice a return of your early-pregnancy fatigue. Frequent naps may help. Call your doctor if you experience steady, painful contractions that may signal early labor, a sudden decrease in fetal movement, leaking fluid from vagina or a burning sensation during urination.

In the ninth month your "nesting" instinct will increase -- you may find yourself spending a lot of time shopping for baby clothes. As your due date approaches, pack your overnight bag for the hospital. You will continue to have difficulties sleeping. Call your doctor if your water breaks, if you experience increasingly more frequent and intense contractions that are not relieved by changing position, lower-back pain spreading to abdomen and legs, nausea, diarrhea, pink or blood-streaked mucus leaking from vagina, contractions that last 45 seconds and occur more frequently than every five minutes.

Resources for more information

- March of Dimes: (914) 428-7100 *www. modimes.org*
- *www.fitpregnancy.com*—a step-by-step guide detailing what to expect and how to have a healthy pregnancy
- *www.babyzone.com*—a variety of information, including baby names
- *www.pregnancytoday.com*

Healthy moms lead to healthy babies

Follow these steps, both before and during your pregnancy to help your baby have a healthy start in life:

- Nutritious diet
- Regular exercise
- Visit your doctor
- Prenatal vitamins—including folic acid

Things to avoid

The first few weeks in the life of your baby are vital in the creation of major organs and systems, including the brain. To keep your baby safe try to avoid the following:

- Cigarettes
- Alcohol
- X-rays
- Hot tubs and saunas
- Toxic chemicals

Signs of pregnancy

While a pregnancy test is the only way to be certain you are pregnant, you may experience some of the following signs in the weeks following conception:

- Breast tenderness
- Nausea and/or fatigue
- Missed menstrual period
- Frequent urination

Daily Diet and Exercise

Smart Serving Sizes

Did you know that...

• 3 oz. of meat, poultry or fish is equal to a deck of playing cards or an audio cassette tape

• 1 cup of fruit or yogurt is equal to a baseball

• 1 medium potato is equal to a computer mouse

• 1 standard bagel is equal to a hockey puck

• 2 tablespoons of peanut butter is equal to a golf ball

• 1 slice of cheese is equal to a 3.5 inch computer disk

• 1/2 cup of cooked veggies is equal to 6 asparagus spears, 7 to 8 baby carrots, 1 ear of corn, or 3 spears of broccoli

Living a healthy lifestyle includes diet and exercise. Those who are inactive increase their likelihood of becoming overweight. They also miss important opportunities to improve their health, reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, and maintain their bone strength through weight-bearing or strength-training exercise.

Self-motivation is sometimes half the battle in staying fit. Here are some tips to get started:

1. Set specific goals—having something to work toward gives you a reason to get active.

2. Make it personal—you must want to do it for yourself and no-one else.

3. Tap into your passion—find something you love and do it well.

4. Plan small steps with measurable results—this keeps you focused and realistic.

5. Be a team player—it's easier to stay committed when you're in it together.

6. Have a winning attitude—focus on what you do well and visualize yourself achieving your goal.

7. Out-do yourself—striving to beat your own records will keep you going.

8. Bounce back—top athletes view setbacks as an opportunity for learning.

9. Stay safe and strong—when you're keeping healthy and in shape you reduce your risk of injury.

10. R&R—a break will keep you focused, help you achieve balance and avoid burnout.

Stress Management

Stress can be anything that stimulates you and increases your level of alertness. Life without a small form of stimulus would be incredibly dull and boring. On the other hand, life with too much stimulus becomes unpleasant and tiring. You may even damage your health in the process. Too much stress can seriously interfere with your ability to perform effectively and at your peak.

The key to stress management is to keep yourself at a level of stimulation that is healthy and enjoyable.

If you are exposed to a high level of stress for more than a year, your body may exhibit the symptoms listed at right.

The internal symptoms of long-term stress include:

- Worry or anxiety
- Confusion and an inability to concentrate or make decisions
- Feeling ill
- Feeling out of control or overwhelmed by events
- Mood changes like:
  - -Depression
  - -Frustration
  - -Hostility
  - -Helplessness
  - -Impatience and irritability
  - -Restlessness
  - -Feeling lethargic
  - -Difficulty sleeping

These symptoms of stress should not be taken in isolation. Other factors could cause them. However, if you are exhibiting a number of them, it would be worth investigating stress management techniques or seeking the advice of your health care provider.

Short-Term Physical Symptoms of Stress

- Faster heart beat
- Increased sweating
- Cool skin
- Cold hands and feet
- Feelings of nausea (butterflies in the stomach)
- Rapid breathing
- Tense muscles
- Dry mouth
- A desire to urinate
- Diarrhea

Long-Term Physical Symptoms

- Change in appetite
- Frequent colds
- Illnesses such as asthma, back pain, digestive problems, headaches, skin eruptions
- Sexual disorders
- Aches and pains
- Feelings of intense and long-term tiredness