

Well Visit, Ages 18 to 50: Care Instructions

Your Care Instructions



Physical exams can help you stay healthy. Your doctor has checked your overall health and may have suggested ways to take good care of yourself. He or she 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 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.
- Get at least 30 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week. Walking is a good choice. You also may want to do other activities, such as running, swimming, cycling, or playing tennis or team sports. Discuss any changes in your exercise program with your doctor.
- Do not smoke or allow others to smoke around you. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about stop-smoking programs and medicines. These can increase your chances of quitting for good.
- Talk to your doctor about whether you have any risk factors for sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Having one sex partner (who does not have STIs and does not have sex with anyone else) is a good way to avoid these infections.
- Use birth control if you do not want to have children at this time. Talk with your doctor about the choices available and what might be best for you.
- Protect your skin from too much sun. When you're outdoors from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., stay in the shade or cover up with clothing and a hat with a wide brim. Wear sunglasses that block UV rays. Even when it's cloudy, put broad-spectrum sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher) on any exposed skin.
- See a dentist one or two times a year for checkups and to have your teeth cleaned.
- Wear a seat belt in the car.

- Drink alcohol in moderation, if at all. That means no more than 2 drinks a day for men and 1 drink a day for women.

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

For everyone

- **Cholesterol.** Have the fat (cholesterol) in your blood tested after age 20. 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.
- **Vision.** Talk with your doctor about how often to have a glaucoma test.
- **Diabetes.** Ask your doctor whether you should have tests for diabetes.
- **Colon cancer.** Have a test for colon cancer at age 50. You may have one of several tests. If you are younger than 50, you may need a test earlier if you have any risk factors. Risk factors include whether you already had a precancerous polyp removed from your colon or whether your parent, brother, sister, or child has had colon cancer.

For women

- **Breast exam and mammogram.** Talk to your doctor about when you should have a clinical breast exam and a mammogram. Medical experts differ on whether and how often women under 50 should have these tests. Your doctor can help you decide what is right for you.
- **Pap test and pelvic exam.** Begin Pap tests at age 21. A Pap test is the best way to find cervical cancer. The test often is part of a pelvic exam. Ask how often to have this test.
- **Tests for sexually transmitted infections (STIs).** Ask whether you should have tests for STIs. You may be at risk if you have sex with more than one person, especially if your partners do not wear condoms.

For men

- **Tests for sexually transmitted infections (STIs).** Ask whether you should have tests for STIs. You may be at risk if you have sex with more than one person, especially if you do not wear a condom.
- **Testicular cancer exam.** Ask your doctor whether you should check your testicles regularly.
- **Prostate exam.** Talk to your doctor about whether you should have a blood test (called a PSA test) for prostate cancer. Experts differ on whether and when men should have this test. Some experts suggest it if you are older than 45 and are African-American or have a father or brother who got prostate cancer when he was younger than 65.

When should you call for help?

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

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patientEd>

Enter **P072** in the search box to learn more about "**Well Visit, Ages 18 to 50: Care Instructions**".

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