



## Preventive Health Services For Women

*Data collected from a variety of sources and compiled by the Los Angeles County Office of Women's Health.*

**Getting checked regularly by your doctor can help prevent disease** or find it early, when it is most easily treated. For example, medical screenings help find disease or injury in people who may show no symptoms. Immunizations help prevent certain infections. Preventive services give you options that can save or improve the quality of your life.

Below is a list of recommended screenings and preventive services that are important to women. These recommendations are primarily based on information from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. However, your own screening or immunization needs may vary depending on your individual risk factors.

Screening/ Intervention	Condition	Disease/Condition Description	When & How Often	What Happens During Screening/Intervention	Why It's Important
<b>Cardiovascular Screenings</b>					
Cholesterol Test	High Blood Cholesterol	Cholesterol a fatty material in the blood, may cause buildup in the arteries, leading to increased risk for heart disease, stroke, and other blood vessel problems.	Age 45 and over (or younger with risk factors), then at least every 5 years or as doctor recommends <sup>1</sup>	Blood is drawn from the patient and sent to the lab for testing of total cholesterol, LDL and HDL levels.	High LDL cholesterol can cause hardening and narrowing of arteries, which might lead to a heart attack. High cholesterol is very common in women, however, treatment is available. Physical activity and a healthy diet can lower one's cholesterol level.
Blood Pressure Measurement	High Blood Pressure	Blood pressure below 120/80 is considered normal. When the pressure in blood vessels is too high, it can damage the heart, brain, and kidneys.	Part of a general health exam, at least every 2 years <sup>1</sup>	A band placed around the patient's arm is inflated. As the band is deflated, blood pressure is measured.	Though high blood pressure often has no symptoms, once caught it is treatable. Physical activity and a healthy diet can help control blood pressure.
Body Mass Index (BMI)	Obesity/ Overweight	BMI is calculated from a person's weight and height and is used to determine whether a person is obese or overweight.	Part of a general health exam <sup>1</sup>	Weight and height are measured and BMI is calculated. Calculate your BMI at <a href="http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi">www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi</a>	Being obese/overweight increases heart disease risk, and is a top preventable cause of death among Americans.

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<b>Breast and Cervical Cancer Screenings</b>					
Mammogram	Breast Cancer	Breast cancer is a cancerous growth that begins in the breasts, but may spread if untreated.	Age 40 and over every 1-2 years <sup>1</sup>	After a clinical breast exam by a clinician, each breast is placed between two X-ray panels to get a clear picture of any lumps.	One in eight women are diagnosed with breast cancer. However, early detection can greatly improve survival.
Pap Test	Cervical Cancer	Cervical cancer is an abnormal growth of cells in the cervix (the part between a women's uterus/womb and vagina).	If sexually active or between ages 21-65, every 1-3 years. Age 65+ discuss with doctor <sup>1</sup>	A speculum is inserted into the vagina to see inside. The doctor uses a brush to take a light scraping of cells, which will be analyzed in a lab.	Pap tests are important for the prevention and early detection of cervical cancer.
<b>Colorectal Exams: Talk to your doctor about which screening or combination of screenings (listed below) is best for you.</b>					
Fecal Occult Blood Test	Colorectal Cancer	Hidden (occult) blood in stool can be a sign of colon cancer.	Age 50 and over, yearly <sup>1</sup>	The patient's stool is examined for any hidden blood. If there is blood, further testing is needed.	Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death and the third most commonly diagnosed cancer in the U.S.
Flex-Sigmoidoscopy or Colonoscopy	Colorectal Cancer	Colorectal Cancer is cancer of the colon (large intestine) or rectum (end of large intestine) that often begins as a polyp, or growth.	Age 50 and over, Flex-Sig: every 5 years or as doctor recommends, Colonoscopy: every 10 years <sup>1</sup>	The patient may be offered a drug to feel relaxed. A thin tube with video camera is inserted through the anus into the colon. The doctor will look for and remove any polyps. Test may be uncomfortable but isn't painful.	People over 50 are especially at risk for colorectal cancer. However, early detection through regular screenings can prevent or cure colorectal cancer.
<b>Screenings To Discuss With Your Doctor:</b>					
Blood Sugar Test	Diabetes	Too much sugar in the blood. Symptoms are excessive thirst, weight loss, frequent urination, and blurred vision. However, diabetes may be without symptoms.	If you have symptoms, high blood pressure, or high cholesterol <sup>1</sup>	Blood is tested for sugar levels.	Diabetes can cause heart disease, blindness, stroke and kidney failure. Diabetes is often linked to obesity and lack of physical exercise. Regular exercise and a healthy diet can reduce your risk for diabetes.
Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD's) tests	STD's include: HIV, Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, Syphilis, Hepatitis, Genital Herpes, Genital Warts and Human Papilloma Virus.	STD's are transmitted through sex. They can cause pain, discomfort, and abnormalities in the genitalia. In women, they have been associated with pelvic inflammatory disease, infertility and cervical cancer.	Talk to your doctor, especially if you change partners or you or your partner has more than one partner. Sexually active women ages 25 and younger should receive routine Chlamydia screening.	There are different tests for different STD's, so you need to be open with your doctor to make sure you get the right tests. Tests may require a blood sample, urine sample, or a sample of fluid or cells from the genitals or reproductive tract.	STD's can have no symptoms. When caught early with testing many STD's are treatable. Safe sex practices, honesty and openness with sex partners can reduce your risk of STD's.

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Bone Mineral Density Test	Osteoporosis	In osteoporosis, the bones become weak and break easily. Fractures of the hip and spine, usually as a result of a fall, can be very disabling.	Age 65 or earlier if you have risk factors and as doctor recommends <sup>1</sup>	The test is painless and usually uses X-rays to measure bone density in the hip and spine.	1 in 2 women over 50 will have an osteoporosis related fracture in her remaining lifetime. Osteoporosis often has no symptoms. Physical activity and getting enough calcium through a healthy diet and supplements can help maintain healthy bones.
Depression Screen	Depression	Symptoms include feeling sad, hopeless, always tired, being unable to enjoy things, eating and sleeping more or less than usual, having stomach or headaches.	Part of a periodic medical visit <sup>1</sup>	Screening usually consists of taking a questionnaire or survey on one's mood or feelings. It can also involve talking to a counselor.	One in five women experiences depression during their lifetime. Depression is a serious medical condition that can affect one's quality of life and is treatable through therapy and/or medications.
Alcohol Screen	Alcoholism	Symptoms: craving/depending on alcohol, drinking too much, behaving harmfully to yourself and/or others when drinking	Part of a periodic medical visit <sup>1</sup>	Test consists of a spoken/written survey of drinking patterns.	Alcohol impairs judgement, leads to severe medical problems, and is a leading underlying cause of motor vehicle death.
Tobacco Use Screen	Tobacco Use	Tobacco use increases risks of heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, lung disease, cancer, tooth/gum disease, and pregnancy complications.	Part of every medical visit <sup>1</sup>	Test consists of a spoken/written survey of tobacco use.	Tobacco use is the leading underlying cause of preventable death and disability in the U.S. It is important to quit whether on your own or with medical assistance.
Domestic Abuse Screen	Domestic Abuse	Domestic abuse is any act that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm to partners, family, or relatives, including children, elders, siblings, and spouses.	California Law requires a screen for domestic abuse in routine medical visits at licensed clinics.	Bring concerns of abuse to a doctor, who can provide support and life-saving resources or call the Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800 978-3600 for a confidential conversation and crisis intervention services and referrals.	About one-third of all women may experience domestic abuse in their lifetime. Often abuse goes unreported. All women should know that help is available.

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<b>Immunizations</b>					
Influenza (Flu) Vaccine	Influenza (Flu)	A viral infection causing sore throat, cough, fever, fatigue, headache, and/or nausea.	Age 50 and over every year or at an earlier age if clinician recommends <sup>1</sup>	Immunization usually consists of an injection to the upper arm.	Influenza can be serious and even fatal, especially in older women. Vaccines can prevent flu or reduce recovery time.
Pneumo-coccal Vaccine	Pneumo-coccal Pneumonia	A common lung infection, which causes fever, chills, uneasy breathing, chest pain, and severe coughing.	Age 65 and over or at an earlier age if clinician recommends <sup>1</sup>	Immunization is an injection to the upper arm that may cause temporary soreness.	Immunization can prevent pneumonia, which is a leading cause of hospitalization and death among older women.
Tetanus Vaccine	Tetanus	A bacterial disease causing muscle stiffness, especially in the jaw (lockjaw), and fever.	Every ten years <sup>1</sup>	An injection in the upper arm that may cause temporary soreness & swelling.	Tetanus bacteria can enter the body through cuts or wounds. Tetanus is a fatal disease.

## Sources Consulted

### Footnotes

1. US Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) [www.ahrq.gov/clinic/uspstfix.htm](http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/uspstfix.htm)

### Sources of General Information

For more information, check out these websites.

1. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality [www.preventiveservices.gov](http://www.preventiveservices.gov)
2. American Cancer Society [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)
3. American Heart Association [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)
4. CDC National Immunization Program [www.cdc.gov/nip](http://www.cdc.gov/nip)
5. National Cancer Institute [www.nci.nih.gov](http://www.nci.nih.gov)
6. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute [www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov)
7. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism [www.niaaa.nih.gov](http://www.niaaa.nih.gov)
8. National Mental Health Association [www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org)
9. National Osteoporosis Foundation [www.nof.org/osteoporosis](http://www.nof.org/osteoporosis)
10. National Women's Health Information Center [www.4woman.gov](http://www.4woman.gov)