

# healthy habits



Empowering Consumers with Better Health Care

Issue 9

## Preventing Disease and Illness

Preventive screening saves lives and money. Unfortunately, many Americans do not routinely follow some basic health screening recommendations. Routine screenings can identify a previously undiagnosed condition. Physicians can then intervene early with treatments and therapies to cure or control the condition and inform the individual of lifestyle changes that can be taken to improve health outcomes and costs.

For example, stroke and heart attack are two of the most common causes of death and severe disability in America. Yet these diseases are largely preventable through early detection and treatment. Screening for high blood pressure and high blood cholesterol is an important first step in identifying at-risk individuals who may otherwise go undiagnosed. Early detection and treatment for diabetes can also greatly improve health.



**Routine screenings:  
identify conditions  
early.**

This newsletter will address the steps you should take to ensure that you actively engage in the right prevention practices for the maintenance of your health.

### Health Risk Assessments – a health report card

The first step to preventive care is to have a Health Risk

Assessment. A Health Risk Assessment is like a personalized health report card with specific suggestions on how you can improve your health by both prevention and treatment. Some health plans offer assessments online to their members. There are also online sites that will give you a free report, or a report for a small fee. (See Newsletter #2)

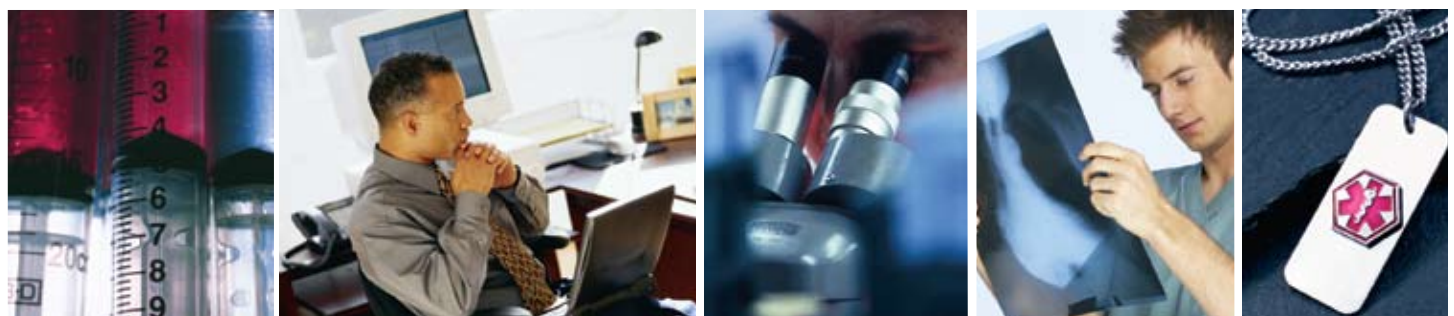
Your Health Risk Assessment will include information about diseases and illnesses you may be susceptible to. It will suggest medical screenings to help catch any of these illnesses early as well as identify lifestyle changes that can help. The common proverb, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” is certainly true. Consider too that an ounce is also much less expensive than a pound. Health Risk Assessments can help save you time and money down the road.

Once you have the results of your assessment, follow its suggestions. To be safe and healthy means you must actively participate in the prevention of disease and, at the very least, get appropriate screenings, early diagnosis, and treatment. Regular exams and screenings can help save lives.

### Screening tests

The following screening tests have been recommended by the Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates.<sup>(1)</sup> Harvard Vanguard is a multi-specialty medical group practice that delivers health and wellness services in the Boston area. They have developed an excellent chart of recommended screening tests. If you have a family history or other risk factors for any of these conditions, your doctor may recommend more frequent screenings.

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## Screening Tests for Women:

### In Your 20s:

Height and weight	Every 3 years.
Blood pressure	At all appointments; at least once every 3 years, more frequently if high.
Cholesterol screening	At least every 5 years, more frequently if high.
Diabetes screening	Every 3 years for those with risk factors.
Chlamydia & STD screening	Once a year for sexually-active women up to age 26.
Glaucoma screening	Every 3-5 years for women at high risk, at least once for women with no risk.
Melanoma screening	At least every 5 years, no more often than once a year for women at high-risk.
Breast cancer screening	Clinical breast exam (CBE) every 3 years; Mammography may be recommended for high risk patients.
Cervical cancer screening	Pap test every 1 to 3 years depending upon risk factors.

### 30s (add or modify)

Glaucoma screening	Every 2-4 years.
Cervical cancer screening	Pap test every year, or for women at low risk every 3 years after 3 consecutive annual negative results.

### 40s (add or modify)

Diabetes screening	Every 3 years for women over 45 years, with risk factors.
Breast cancer screening	Clinical breast exam (CBE) and mammogram every 1-2 years.
Colorectal cancer screening	High risk — colonoscopy every 10 years, fecal occult blood test yearly, sigmoidoscopy every 5 years.

### 50s (add or modify)

Blood pressure	At all appointments; at least once each year and more frequently if high.
Diabetes screening	Every 3 years.
Osteoporosis screening	Not more frequently than every 2 years for postmenopausal women with other risk factors.
Breast cancer screening	Clinical breast exam (CBE) and mammogram every year.

### 60s and above (add or modify)

Osteoporosis screening	Not more frequently than every 2 years for women over 65.
Glaucoma screening	Every 2-4 years up until age 65, then every 1-2 years.

### 70s and above (add or modify)

Cervical cancer screening	Pap test every 1-3 years at patient/clinician discretion or high risk.
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## Screening Tests for Men:

### In Your 20s:

Height and weight	Every 3 years.
Blood pressure	At all appointments; at least once every 3 years, more frequently if high.
Cholesterol screening	At least every 5 years, more frequently if high.
Diabetes screening	Every 3 years for those with risk factors.
Chlamydia & STD screening	Once a year for sexually-active men up to age 26.
Glaucoma screening	Every 3-5 years for men at high risk, at least once for men with no risk.
Melanoma screening	At least every 5 years, no more often than once a year for men at high risk.

### 30s (add or modify)

Cholesterol screening	Every 3 years for those with risk factors.
Glaucoma screening	Every 2-4 years.

### 40s (add or modify)

Diabetes screening	Every 3 years for men over 45 years old, with risk factors.
Colorectal cancer screening	High risk — colonoscopy every 10 years, fecal occult blood test yearly, sigmoidoscopy every 5 years.
Prostate cancer screening	Counseling for men at high risk.

### 50s (add or modify)

Diabetes screening	Every 3 years.
Colorectal cancer screening	Colonoscopy every 10 years or fecal occult blood test every year, sigmoidoscopy every 5 years.
Prostate cancer screening	Counseling and possible prostate-specific antigen (PSA) and digital rectal exam.

### 60s and above (add or modify)

Glaucoma screening	Every 2-4 years up until age 65, then every 1-2 years.
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## Reference

<sup>(1)</sup> Harvard Vanguard. Screening Tests for Women. Screening Tests for Men. Retrieved January 2006 at <http://www.harvardvanguard.org/info/infoScreenF.asp>.

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