

Health checks

Regular health checks assist in the early detection of disease or illness and are an important part of staying well. The health checks recommended here relate to your age and stage of life. If you are at higher risk of any condition due to a family history or your medical profile, you will need a personalised health check plan developed in consultation with your health professional.

Bowel health

Bowel cancer is a common cancer and if detected early has a good recovery rate. A bowel cancer test is recommended every 2 years between 50-80 years of age. This can be done by you in your home using a bowel testing kit. To have a kit sent to you call Bowel Cancer Australia 1800 555 494.

Bone health

You may be at increased risk of bone problems if you have or have had: an eating disorder, thyroid problems, a poor diet or taken certain medications such as steroids. Talk to your doctor about your risk and ways to maintain strong bones. Also, after menopause women are at increased risk of bone thinning (osteoporosis). If you are at risk for osteoporosis your doctor will suggest a bone density scan (DXA).

Breast health

Early detection of breast cancer increases the chances of treatment success. Have a screening mammogram every 2 years between 50-70 years of age. Contact BreastScreen Australia on 132 050 for more information and to find a location near you.

Cardiovascular health

You may not know you are developing cardiovascular or heart disease, therefore it is important to have a:

- blood pressure check – every 2 years after you turn 18
- cholesterol check – every 5 years after the age of 45
- diabetes check – blood sugars every 3 years after you turn 40

Fertility & reproductive health

It is ideal to be in the best health you can before becoming pregnant. A pre-pregnancy health check is a good idea to assess things like your immunisation status and general health.

Immunisation

Immunisations increase your body's ability to fight disease.

- Young women should have the vaccine for the human papilloma virus (HPV) before becoming sexually active to prevent cervical cancer
- Check your childhood immunisations are up to date, for example a tetanus booster
- It is recommended to have a flu vaccination if you are:
 - o Over 65 years of age
 - o pregnant – especially in the last trimester because your baby will also be protected
 - o if you have a chronic condition such as severe asthma or diabetes
 - o worried that you are likely to get the flu and it would impact significantly on you
- If you are over 65 years have a pneumococcal vaccine

Mental & emotional health

- If you are experiencing symptoms such as intense sadness, irritability, fatigue, anxiety, have had changes to your eating or sleeping habits, see your doctor to discuss these symptoms as early as you can
- Intimate partner violence is one of the biggest influences on women's health. If you don't have someone to talk to please call 1800RESPECT (1800 7377328)

Pap smear test

Have a pap smear test every 2 years (after you become sexually active or after you turn 20 years of age) until you are 70 years of age.

Sexual health

If you are under 30 years of age and sexually active have a urine test for chlamydia each year, as chlamydia can affect your fertility and often has no symptoms. If you have sex with one or more new partners without a condom, it is recommended you talk to your doctor about checking for other sexually transmissible diseases.

Skin health

Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer. Monitor your skin particularly for changes in size, shape or colour or anything unusual such as pain or sensation. Talk with your doctor about what to do next.

For more information go to jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/healthchecks

Updated August 2014

This fact sheet is designed to be informative and educational. It is not intended to provide specific medical advice or replace advice from your medical practitioner.

Jean Hailes for Women's Health gratefully acknowledges the support of the Australian Government.