



# Health checks for women

It's important to see your doctor for regular health checks so you can find and treat any conditions early. A general check-up is recommended once a year. If you are at higher risk of a condition or disease, you may need to have some checks more often.

## Heart check

Cardiovascular disease is a leading cause of death for Australian women. You might not know if you are developing heart disease, so regular check-ups are important.

A heart health check is recommended every two years between the ages of 45 and 79. People with diabetes should have checks from age 35, and First Nations people from age 30. Your doctor will check your blood pressure and your cholesterol and blood sugar levels. They will also ask questions about your family and medical history (e.g. diet, exercise, smoking and alcohol) that may increase your risk of heart disease.

## Diabetes screening

Diabetes is a serious condition where glucose (sugar) in the blood is higher than normal. This can cause health problems over time. You can have type 2 diabetes without any symptoms. If you have risk factors for developing type 2 diabetes (e.g. a family history of the condition or high blood pressure), talk to your doctor about how often you should be tested.

## Bone health check

Osteoporosis is a disease that causes bones to become less dense, lose strength and break more easily. After menopause, your bone density decreases. Your doctor may recommend a bone health check once a year from age 45. Depending on your risk of osteoporosis, they might suggest a bone density scan (DXA) every two years.

## Breast check and screening

Early detection of breast cancer increases the chance of successful treatment.

### Self-checks

Get to know how your breasts look and feel. Check them every month and see your doctor if you notice any unusual changes (e.g. a lump or thick tissue).

### Breast cancer screening mammogram

Have a free screening mammogram (breast X-ray) every two years between the ages of 50 and 74. For more information about mammograms, or to find a screening location near you, contact **BreastScreen Australia** on **13 20 50**.

## Bowel screening

Bowel cancer is a common cancer. If detected early, there is a good recovery rate. If you are aged between 50 and 74, the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program will send you a free test every two years. Follow the instructions to take a sample at home, then send it in the mail for testing. For more information, contact the **National Bowel Cancer Screening Program on 1800 627 701**.

## Mental health

If you have symptoms such as intense sadness, irritability, fatigue, anxiety or sleep problems, talk to your doctor as soon as possible. If you are experiencing intimate partner violence and need support, call **1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)**.

## Cervical screening test

Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable cancers. The cervical screening test checks your cervix for the human papilloma virus (HPV), which is the cause of most cervical cancers. Regular cervical screening is the best way to protect yourself from cervical cancer. It's recommended you do a test every five years from age 25 to 74. For more information, contact the **National Cervical Screening Program on 1800 627 701**.

## Sexually transmitted infection (STI) screening

If you are sexually active, particularly if you have sex without barrier protection (e.g. a condom), you might get an STI. Some STIs don't have obvious symptoms, while others (e.g. chlamydia or gonorrhoea) may affect your health and fertility. Talk to your doctor about how often you should be tested.

## Pre-pregnancy health check

If you are planning to get pregnant, it's important to be as healthy as possible. It's a good idea to get a pre-pregnancy health check to assess your general health, smoking and alcohol habits, weight and immunisation status.

## Other health checks

It's a good idea to make regular appointments to check for other potential health issues, such as hearing, skin, sight and dental. You can also keep up to date with the latest immunisations to protect you from disease.

### More information

For more information, resources and references, visit the [jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/health-checks](https://jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/health-checks)

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Disclaimer: This information does not replace medical advice. If you are worried about your health, talk to your doctor or healthcare team.

We write health information for people with diverse backgrounds, experiences and identities. We use the term 'women', but we acknowledge that this term is not inclusive of all people who may use our content.

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