# IMPROVING HEALTH FOR WOMEN

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**DO YOU RECEIVE THESE RECOMMENDED HEALTH SCREENINGS?**

* At age 20, begin blood pressure screening with regular healthcare visit or once every two years if

 blood pressure is less than 120 over 80.

* Cholesterol (fasting lipoprotein profile) beginning at age 20 then every 4-6 years if normal.
* Blood sugar or A1C beginning at age 45 then every 3 years if normal (earlier if at risk)
* Dental examination and cleaning every 6 months (or as recommended by Dentist)
* If you have any visions changes you should see a doctor and then start annual screening at 60-65
* If you have any hearing changes talk with your health care provider
* Yearly clinical breast exam by a health care professional for age 40 and older. Also women of every age should be familiar with their own breasts to be aware of changes that could signal a problem.
* Screening mammogram beginning at age 40 (health care provider may recommend earlier)
* Yearly pelvic examination (or as recommended by your health care provider)
* Pap test beginning at age 21 (the interval based on history and health care provider’s recommendations)
* Colon Cancer screening via a stool test for blood annually beginning at age 50 (earlier if at risk –family history or blood in stool ) or a sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy if recommended by your provider
* Immunizations: Tdap and/or Td (Tetanus): Everyone should receive a one-time dose of Tdap and then a Td every 10 years; Influenza (Flu): Annually especially if high risk; Pneumonia vaccine: Once after age 65 (earlier if at risk or a smoker); Measles (MMR) Vaccine: One or two doses as indicated; Hepatitis B series: All adults at risk especially diabetics; Hepatitis A series: If at risk; HPV series: 9 through 26 years of age; Varicella: 2 doses, unless immune or close contact with immunocompromised persons; Zoster (shingles): Once after age 50. Check with health care provider for needed immunizations.
* Ovarian Cancer Screening at age 50 (age 25 if family history). Locations: UKMC (1-800-766-8279), Hardin, Mason, Floyd, McCracken, Pulaski and Greenup County Health Centers (1-855-226-0174).

 **BENEFITS OF FAMILY PLANNING**

Family planning services include service for both men and women. Family planning services help you plan when you/your partner want to become pregnant, provide resources to prevent pregnancy until you are ready for pregnancy and provide other health services that will promote a healthy pregnancy and baby when you decide you want to become pregnant. Services include pregnancy testing and counseling, contraceptive services, STD testing, preconception health services/counseling and basic infertility services. Contraception options include intrauterine device (IUD), hormonal implant, birth control pills, Depo Provera injection, condom, natural family planning and other contraceptive methods. The emergency contraceptive pill (ECP) is available and should be taken as soon as possible after unprotected sex, but can be effective up to 72 hours.

 **PERSISTENT HIGH RISK HPV CAN CAUSE CERVICAL CANCER**

Human Papillomavirus (HPV), a sexually transmitted disease, causes nearly all cervical cancers. Some people don’t develop symptoms, but can still spread HPV. Condoms may offer some protection but HPV can spread by contact with infected areas not covered by condoms. Often the immune system will clear HPV, but if it doesn’t and the infection persists for more than two years, there’s increased risk of cervical changes which could turn into cancer. Pap test for cervical cancer screening is recommended for women beginning at age 21. Ask your health care provider for recommendation on Pap and HPV testing based on age and history, and about the HPV vaccine, available for ages 9-26 years of age.

**UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING MENOPAUSE (“THE CHANGE”)**

As a woman enters mid-life she may experience physical and emotional changes caused by a normal decrease of estrogen, a hormone produced by the ovaries. This decrease in estrogen takes place over a few years (perimenopause) before the last menstrual period (menopause). Symptoms of lower estrogen levels include heavy and/or irregular periods, hot flushes (“flashes”), night sweats, mood swings, trouble sleeping, vaginal dryness resulting in painful sex, and inability to concentrate or remember things. Discuss with your health care provider ways to manage the symptoms of menopause, including the pros and cons of hormone replacement.

OSTEOPOROSIS PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

As women enter menopause and beyond, bones tend to become thinner and weaker as a result of less estrogen and can lead to a condition called osteoporosis (os-teo-por-o-sis) or “brittle bone disease”. Thin, weak bones often lead to breaks in the hip, spine, or wrists and cause a hunchback appearance. Osteoporosis usually doesn’t have any symptoms until a bone break is discovered. A painless test called a ***bone density test*** can determine if osteoporosis is present and if medication is needed. Discuss the possible need for this test with your health care provider. Reduce your risk of developing osteoporosis by practicing these healthy living habits:

* Daily weight bearing exercise such as walking
* A diet rich in calcium; low fat dairy products, dark leafy vegetables, sardines and calcium fortified orange juice and cereals are good sources. Vitamin D is also important for strong bones; it improves the ability of the body to absorb calcium. Talk to your health care provider before taking calcium or vitamin D supplements and ask him/her about any need to monitor your calcium and vitamin D levels.
* Avoid: smoking and/or heavy alcohol consumption

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE/SEXUAL ASSAULT: IT WON’T JUST GO AWAY**

***Domestic violence*** is physical, verbal, or emotional mistreatment between two people. It can happen to anyone regardless of education, income, race, age, religion, or marital status and it is against the law.

Abusers don’t stop in spite of their promises and regrets but, according to research and statistics, over time the abuse almost always gets worse. If you find yourself in a situation where you or your children are being

mistreated, get in touch with someone who can help such as a social worker, physician, nurse, counselor, or

another trusted individual. Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) for

more information. Always have a safe place to go if needed and in an emergency situation call 911.

***Sexual Assault*** is any sexual act without your consent, with a person who may be a stranger, acquaintance, spouse, family member, or intimate partner. Call the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-HOPE (4673) for more information. The Adult/Child Abuse Protective Service Reporting Hotline is 1-800-752-6200.

**HEART ATTACKS, STROKES, DIABETES AND LUNG CANCER ARE NOT JUST FOR MEN!**

***FACT***: Heart disease is the leading cause of death for women in the United States; 1 in 4 female deaths.

***FACT***: Most women who die suddenly from coronary heart disease had no previous symptoms.

***FACT***: Lung cancer is the number one cause of cancer deaths in women.

***FACT***: Diabetes increases the risk of serious health problems- heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, blindness.

***FACT***: Being overweight increases the chance of developing diabetes, high blood pressure & heart disease.

***FACT***: Smoking increases the chance of osteoporosis, high blood pressure, heart disease, blood vessel disease, cancer of the mouth, throat, lung & cervix, and lung conditions such as asthma, emphysema, and bronchitis. Children exposed to second hand smoke are more likely to have ear infections, asthma, lung infections, as well as an increased risk of dying from SIDS (crib death).

STAY ACTIVE TO IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH AND MOOD

Exercise benefits both the body and mind. It decreases anxiety, helps control weight and blood pressure, boosts the immune system, elevates the mood, maintains bone health and increases strength and flexibility, improves sleep patterns, reduces arthritis pain, helps to control or prevent diabetes, and decreases the risk of heart disease and stroke. Research has proven that low to moderate physical activity (such as brisk walking, swimming, yard work/gardening, dancing, tennis, bicycling) for just 30 minutes–1 hour on most days can dramatically improve your health. Always check with your health care provider before beginning an exercise program.

## A SIMPLE RECIPE FOR HEALTHY LIVING

 Stop smoking and avoid secondary smoke (Ask your health department provider for assistance)

 Exercise regularly

 Maintain a normal weight, blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels

 Eat at least 5 fruits or vegetables every day (adequate diet also includes low fat/high fiber foods)

 Limit or avoid alcohol and other substances that can be abused

 Safe proof your home to prevent accidents

 Find a medical home and talk with your health care provider about what annual exams you need

 Always use your seatbelt

 Work with your health care provider to set *realistic* goals for yourself and have some fun!

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