

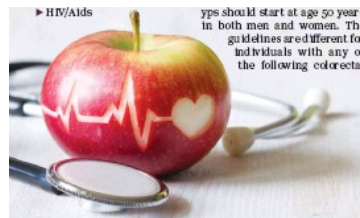
- Periodic health examinations

Dr Dulcy: Take charge of your health

RISKS: FIND OUT WHAT SCREENINGS YOU NEED Do checks on these regularly as your doctor advises.

The Citizen (Gauteng) · 8 Aug 2022 · 11 · Dr Dulcy Rakumakoe

It is important that you take charge of your health starting now. Schedule an appointment with your health care provider to discuss what screenings and exams you need and when you need them.



Regular health screenings and tests can help find problems before they start. They also can help find problems early, when chances for treatment and cure are better. By getting the right health services, screenings and treatments, you are taking steps that help your chances for living a longer, healthier life.

Your age, health and family history, lifestyle choices (i.e. what you eat, how active you are, whether you smoke) and other important factors impact what and how often you need healthcare.

The following are the generally recommended screenings:

Breast and cervical cancer early detection

Cholesterol

Colorectal cancer screening High blood pressure Diabetes mellitus

Body weight

Oral health for adults Prostate cancer screening HIV/Aids

Breast and cervical cancer early detection: Deaths from breast and cervical cancers could be avoided if screening rates increased among women at risk. The tests are simple and pain free.

Mammography is available at most private hospitals and provincial government hospitals. Pap smears can be done at your local clinic or general practitioner. Based on risk factors, the tests can be done every three years. **Cholesterol:** A complete cholesterol test is a blood test that can measure the amount of cholesterol and fats in your blood. It helps determine your risk of the buildup of plaques in your arteries that can lead to narrowed or blocked arteries throughout your body (atherosclerosis).

High cholesterol levels usually don't cause any signs or symptoms, so a cholesterol test is an important tool. High cholesterol levels often are a significant risk factor for heart disease.

Adults at average risk of developing heart disease should have their cholesterol checked every five years, beginning at age 18. More frequent testing may be needed if your initial test results were abnormal or if you're at higher risk of heart disease because you:

Have a family history of high cholesterol or heart attacks Are overweight

Are physically inactive

Have diabetes

Eat a high-fat diet

Smoke cigarettes

Are a man older than 45 or a woman older than 55

Colorectal cancer screening: Screening for colorectal cancer and adenomatous polyps should start at age 50 years in both men and women. The guidelines are different for individuals with any of the following colorectal cancer risk factors, they should undergo colonoscopy at an earlier age and more frequently than average risk individuals:

Family history of colorectal cancer or polyps

Family history of a hereditary colorectal cancer syndrome

Personal history of colorectal cancer

Personal history of chronic inflammatory bowel disease (ulcerative colitis or Crohn disease)

Tests that detect adenomatous polyps and cancer, and their recommended frequency, include the following:

Flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years

Colonoscopy every 10 years Double-contrast barium enema every five years

Computed tomographic colonography every five years Hypertension and diabetes mellitus: An important aspect of lowering risk of cardiovascular disease is managing health behaviours and risk factors, such as diet quality, physical activity, smoking, body mass index, blood pressure, total cholesterol or blood glucose. Some measurements, such as body weight and blood pressure, are taken during routine medical consultations and some cardiovascular screening tests begin at age 20. The frequency of follow-up will depend on your level of risk.

Blood pressure is one of the most important screenings because high blood pressure usually has no symptoms so it can't be detected without being measured.

High blood pressure greatly increases your risk of heart disease and stroke. If your blood pressure is below 120/80mm Hg, be sure to get it checked at least once every two years, starting at age 20. If your blood pressure is higher, your doctor may want to check it more often. High blood pressure can be controlled through lifestyle changes and/or medication.

Body weight:

Your healthcare provider may ask for your waist circumference or use your body weight to calculate your body mass index during your routine visit.

These measurements may tell whether you're at a healthy body weight and composition. Being obese puts you at higher risk for health problems such as heart disease, stroke, atrial fibrillation, congestive heart failure. Oral health for adults: Many medications can affect oral and overall health and untreated gum disease can lead to tooth loss. Older teeth are still susceptible to decay, so it's vital to continue a thorough oral hygiene programme that includes twice daily brushing and flossing, regular cleanings and exams.

Mature teeth are more prone to decay around older fillings and at the gum line (root caries). Periodontal disease may also be linked to diabetes, heart disease, stroke and respiratory problems.