

9 Screening Tests for Men

Are you one of those guys who can't remember the last time you stepped foot in a doctor's office? Sure, maybe you've gotten in for something urgent, but what about scheduling an annual exam or screening tests? Maybe you simply forget, think you already have healthy habits, or insist that you "feel just fine." Sorry, guys.... Not quite good enough.

Regular checkups and screening tests aren't something you can afford to ignore. Baseline tests can help your doctor know how your health is changing over time. Plus, silent killers such as high blood pressure or high cholesterol can wreak havoc—and you wouldn't have a clue without being tested.

Here's a simple screening cheat sheet to make your life easier.

1. Abdominal aortic aneurysm. If you have ever smoked, get this ultrasound test one time between ages 65 and 75. This test will show whether or not your largest artery (abdominal aorta) is bulging. If it is, it may burst, putting you at risk for bleeding—and even death.

2. Blood pressure. Starting at age 18:

- Get tested at least every 2 years if your blood pressure is lower than 120/80.
- Get tested once a year if your blood pressure is between 120/80 and 139/89.
- Discuss treatment with your doctor if your blood pressure is 140/90 or higher.

3. Cholesterol. From age 20 to 34, get a regular cholesterol test if you are at increased risk for heart disease. At age 35, get a regular cholesterol test. Ask your doctor how often you need to do this.

4. Colorectal cancer. Get screened for colorectal cancer from age 50 to 75. This screening may include one or more tests, such as fecal occult blood testing, sigmoidoscopy, or colonoscopy. Ask your doctor which test is best for you and how often you need it.

5. Depression. Ask your doctor about being screened for depression if over the past weeks:

- You have felt sad or hopeless

- You have lost interest or pleasure in doing the things you normally enjoy

6. Diabetes. Starting at age 18, get screened if your blood pressure is higher than 135/80 or if you take high blood pressure medicine.

7. Hepatitis C virus (HCV). Get screened once if you:

- Were born between 1945 and 1965.
- Have ever injected drugs.
- Received a blood transfusion before 1992.

8. Lung cancer. Ask your doctor whether or not to be screened if you:

- Are between 55 and 80.
- Have a 30 pack-year smoking history. (This is the number of packs smoked per day times the number of years you smoked.)
- Smoke now or quit within the past 15 years.

9. Overweight and obesity. This is a test you can do yourself. Find your body mass index (BMI) by entering your weight and height into an online BMI calculator.

Discuss with your doctor whether you are at increased risk for any other diseases. If so, you may need other tests.

Be honest with your health care provider and me. Be sure to let us know what worries you—whether it's your weight, alcohol use, or challenges with anxiety. Think of us as your partners in health. We can do a much better job of helping you if we fully understand your health challenges and concerns.

Nothing herein constitutes medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, or is a substitute for professional advice. You should always seek the advice of your physician or other medical professional if you have questions or concerns about a medical condition.

Sources:

1. AHRQ: Men: Stay Healthy at Any Age. Available at: <http://www.ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/patient-involvement/healthy-men/healthy-men.html> Accessed 5-4-16.
2. OWH: Screening tests for men. Available at: <http://www.womenshealth.gov/screening-tests-and-vaccines/screening-tests-for-men/> Accessed 5-4-16.