

Should I Get an Annual Physical Exam?

YES!

For a variety of reasons. Your face-to-face wellness visit helps you connect with your doctor, establish trust, and share your health care preferences before serious illness hits. It's also an opportunity to discuss important health issues like disease screening and lifestyle changes tailored to you. The best way for you to receive comprehensive, personal care is for your doctor to know you at all levels of health.



Is My Physical Covered by Insurance?

It depends on your insurance. Most plans consider an annual physical a covered service, but how much you'll pay out of pocket depends on your specific plan. Contact your insurance company to find out what's covered, which providers are in your network, and how much you'll be responsible to pay.

The annual exam is at its highest value when doctors can devote time to thoroughly discussing your medical history, chronic issues, and recommendations for lifestyle changes. Visits for other concerns should be scheduled with your doctor. If you have a new health concern, your doctor may suggest scheduling a follow-up visit to focus on diagnosing and treating that condition.

What Does an Annual Physical Include?

Your doctor will personalize the appointment based on your medical history and guidelines for your age group. Along with your vital signs and other observations from a physical exam, this information helps your doctor determine whether you are at high- or low-risk for certain illnesses and what tests may be appropriate for you.

- Some of the regular tests you may receive during a visit include:
- Pap smears are performed every three-to-five years.
- EKG screenings are not suggested for people at low risk for heart disease.

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What to Bring to Your Health Appointments:

- Identification
- Health insurance card
- Medical records (if going to a recurring doctor, they should have them on file)
- Family history (if applicable/available)
- List of medications (bring pill bottles if unsure of specifics)
- Any notes or photos tracking symptoms or changes
- Key questions you'd like to address.
- Form of payment (ask about premiums and other costs up front)

What to Expect

- **Check your vital signs.** Your temperature, blood pressure, heart rate, and respiration rate will be recorded to create a baseline for your overall wellness.
- **Perform a physical exam.** Your eyes, ears, and throat will be inspected to help your doctor spot any potential issues. They may lightly touch areas like your abdomen and back.
- **Update your vaccines.** Depending on your age, you may need a new vaccine, or a booster shot.
- **Ensure you get the screenings you need.** Are you due for a blood test, colonoscopy, or bone density screening? Your physician will let you know and can coordinate tests.
- **Discuss treatment recommendations.** Maintaining your health changes over time. A yearly physical brings your care up to date.
- **Provide guidance on reducing your risk for disease.** Your doctor can provide information and motivation to stop smoking, lose unhealthy pounds, or manage risk factors like high blood pressure.
- **Manage your medications.** Your doctor will make sure your prescriptions, over-the-counter drugs, and supplements don't interact with each other. They can also help you manage potential side effects.

Tips to Maintain a Healthy Lifestyle:

- **Eat healthy:** Incorporate fruits and green vegetables, whole grains and varied proteins into your daily meals to combat perimenopause weight gain.
- **Exercise:** Get at least 30 minutes of daily physical activity to prevent bone density loss
- **Sleep:** Get at least 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night
- **Maintain a Health Weight:** Reach and maintain a healthy weight as supported by your doctor.
- **Quit smoking:** Get help to quit or not start smoking.
- **Limit alcohol consumption:** Limit alcohol use to 1 drink or less per day
- **Talk to your doctor:** Talk to your doctor at least once a year about birth control (for premenopausal women), perimenopause/menopause symptoms, and lifestyle or health changes.

Visit livingwell.dc.gov for more health tips, resources, and information.

