Why should I get routine checkups?

Routine checkups can find health problems early. For many health problems, early treatment can help prevent more grave problems. The value of checkups and how often you have them depends mainly on your age and gender. Your own health history and family health history also play a role.

The advice listed below is based on guidelines designed by the American Academy of Family Physicians and the U.S. Preventive Health Task Force. They are guidelines for how often you should see your health care provider for routine exams and tests. These schedules should be used for "well care." If you have any ongoing health problems, you will need checkups more often.

What needs to be checked and how often?

**Men 18 to 39 years old:**

- Every 6 months to 1 year:
  - dental exam.
- Every 2 to 3 years:
  - blood pressure check
  - weight
- Every 5 years:
  - cholesterol check after age 35 or sooner if risk factors for heart disease.
  - blood sugar test if you are overweight or have other risk factors for heart disease.
Men 40 to 49 years old:

- Every 6 months to 1 year:
  - dental exam.
- Every 1-2 years:
  - weight
  - blood pressure check
  - if you have risk factors for cancer, consider screening for prostate and colon cancer (ask your health care provider)
- Every 3 to 5 years:
  - cholesterol check
  - blood sugar check if you have risk factors for heart disease.

Men 50 to 65 years old:

- Every 6 months:
  - dental exam.
- Every year:
  - weight
  - blood pressure check
  - consider screening for prostate cancer (ask your health care provider)
- Every 1 to 3 years:
  - cholesterol check
  - blood sugar check if you have risk factors for heart disease
- Every 5 – 10 years:
  - screening for colon cancer. How often depends upon the test: Fecal occult-blood test every year, flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years. colonoscopy every 10 years

Men over 65 years old:

- Every 6 months:
o dental exam.

- Every year:
  o weight
  o blood pressure check
  o exam to screen for cancers of the skin,
  o consider screening for prostate cancer (ask your health care provider)
- Every 1 to 3 years:
  o cholesterol check
  o blood sugar check if you have risk factors for heart disease
  o check your hearing
- Every 5 – 10 years:
  o screening for colon cancer. How often depends upon the test: Fecal occult-blood test every year, flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years. colonoscopy every 10 years

What immunizations do I need to get?
As an adult, you should have the shots listed below:
- flu shot every year, especially if you are over 50 years old
- tetanus (Td) booster shot every 10 years
- varicella (chickenpox) shot twice in your lifetime. You need this shot if you have never had a varicella shot and you do not know if you ever had chickenpox disease.
- pneumococcal pneumonia shot at age 65 or sooner if ordered by your health care provider.

Should I have a PSA test?
Prostate specific antigen (PSA) is a blood test that can be helpful to detect prostate cancer. There is some debate about the value of the PSA test and
whether it should be done routinely for men over a certain age. Ask your health care provider whether he or she suggests a PSA test for you.

What other health care problems should be a concern?

You should expect your health care provider to counsel you on other ways to stay healthy. Some of these may include:

- **Substance use**: Don’t use tobacco. Avoid using alcohol and drugs while driving, swimming, boating, etc.

- **Diet and exercise**: Try to maintain your weight at a healthy level. Limit fat and cholesterol. Include a lot of grains, fruits, and vegetables in your diet. Get regular physical activity or exercise.

- **Injury prevention**: Use lap and shoulder belts while driving. Use motorcycle and bicycle helmets. Try to prevent falls. Practice safe handling of firearms. Install smoke detectors. Set your hot water heater to less than 120 degrees F. Get CPR training.

- **Dental health**: Visit your dentist at least every year. Brush your teeth with fluoride toothpaste daily. Also floss your teeth daily.

- **Sexual behavior**: Prevent sexually transmitted diseases by avoiding high-risk sexual behavior and by using condoms.