

# Recommended Adult Health Maintenance/Screening Exams

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Keeping up on medical screenings, vaccinations and other health maintenance is critical to adult health. One timely example is whooping cough (or pertussis). This very serious illness can cause pneumonia, seizures, brain damage, and sometimes death—and in April 2012, the Washington State Department of Health declared a statewide whooping cough epidemic. Thirty-seven of our 39 counties have reported cases of pertussis, totaling 4,190 cases so far this year, through September 22. (The same period last year had just 427 reported cases.)

Keeping current on health maintenance screenings is your best defense. The following table outlines key maintenance steps for adults at different stages of life, from age 18 to 70 and older.

For all ages, scheduling a physical exam is a great way to review your health maintenance and screening needs with your doctor. If you are meeting a new doctor, bringing your medical records or any reports of testing with you to your appointment is helpful. Bringing your vaccine record can also help determine what shots may be recommended.

<i>Ages 18–39</i>	
Vaccines	<p><b>Tdap</b>—recommended for those who have not received a booster. This vaccine contains pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine in addition to a tetanus booster. Tdap is especially important for anyone who works with children, cares for children, or has or expects a baby at home, as the pertussis epidemic has been causing severe illness in infants statewide.</p> <p><b>Meningococcal vaccine</b>—recommended once for previously unvaccinated students who are starting college. This helps to prevent meningitis, a serious brain infection that can spread among students living in crowded conditions such as dormitories.</p> <p><b>HPV vaccine</b>—now recommended for both sexes, up to age 26. This series of three shots prevents HPV infection, which can lead to abnormal Pap tests and cervical cancer in women, and penile and anal cancers in men.</p> <p><b>Flu vaccine</b>—recommended yearly for patients of all ages to prevent influenza, a seasonal viral respiratory infection. It is especially important for those with a history of asthma or other respiratory illnesses, smokers, obese patients and women who may be pregnant during flu season because they are at higher risk of severe complications of influenza.</p>
Blood and urine tests	<p><b>STI (sexually transmitted infection) testing</b>—recommended yearly for anyone with a new sexual partner. Complete STI testing involves both blood and urine testing.</p> <p><b>Blood sugar and cholesterol testing</b>—may be recommended based on the patient’s family history, risk factors and prior results.</p>

	<b>Hepatitis B and C testing</b> —recommended for patients with a history of substance use, tattoos or piercings. Patients not immune to hepatitis B may also consider vaccination against this disease, which can be transmitted sexually, through use of contaminated needles or blood transfusion.
Cancer screenings	<b>Pap testing for women</b> , beginning at age 21. This screening looks for abnormal cells on the cervix that may need treatment to prevent cervical cancer. Paps are recommended every three years for women with normal results and may be needed more frequently to follow up on any abnormalities.
<i>Ages 40–49</i>	
Vaccines and tests	<b>Tdap vaccine, flu vaccine, blood/urine tests.</b> These should be considered, as per above guidelines for ages 18–39.
Cancer screenings	<b>Pap testing for women.</b> Paps are recommended every three years for women with normal results and may be needed more frequently to follow up on any abnormalities. <b>Mammogram screening for women.</b> This should be considered yearly, starting at age 40. Screening may start earlier for women with strong family histories of breast cancer.
<i>Ages 50–59</i>	
Vaccines and tests	<b>Tdap vaccine, flu vaccine, blood/urine tests.</b> These should be considered, as per above guidelines for ages 18–39.
Cancer screenings	<b>Colon cancer screening</b> for both men and women starting at age 50. The goal is to find and treat precancerous polyps early, before any symptoms of cancer develop. There are two recommended options for colon cancer screening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colonoscopy—the most complete test for colon cancer. It allows polyps to be removed at the time of screening so they cannot advance to cancer. If no polyps are seen on a colonoscopy and there is no family history of colon cancer, patients will not need any further colon cancer screening for 10 years. If polyps are treated, patients may need more frequent screening as they are likely to develop more polyps.</li> <li>• Fecal occult blood testing—for those who are not ready to proceed with a colonoscopy. This simple test is done at home and mailed to the lab. It should be done yearly as long as the test is negative. A positive test suggests there is microscopic bleeding in the colon, and a colonoscopy should be done to determine the cause.</li> </ul> <b>Prostate cancer screening:</b> This is no longer recommended for patients with no urinary symptoms. Men with urinary symptoms should discuss prostate cancer testing with their doctors. <b>Mammogram screening for women.</b> This is recommended yearly for women over age 50. <b>Pap testing for women.</b> Paps are recommended every three years for

	women with normal results and may be needed more frequently to follow up on any abnormalities.
<i>Ages 60–64</i>	
	<b>All guidelines for ages 50–59 above.</b>
Additional vaccines	<b>Zostavax (shingles vaccine):</b> This vaccine can be given starting at age 50 and can help prevent shingles, the very painful rash that is related to childhood chickenpox exposure and more likely to occur as one ages. It generally is not covered by insurance before age 60, at which point many insurances provide full or partial coverage.
<i>Ages 65–69</i>	
	<b>All guidelines for ages 50–59 above continue to apply.</b>
Additional vaccines and screenings	<p><b>Zostavax (shingles vaccine)</b>—recommended for those who have not yet received it.</p> <p><b>Pneumovax (pneumonia shot)</b>—recommended for all patients at age 65. It prevents the most common bacterial cause of pneumonia.</p> <p><b>DEXA (bone density test)</b>—recommended for women at age 65. This screens for osteoporosis (bone thinning), which can increase the risk of a serious fracture, such as a hip or spine bone with a fall.</p> <p><b>AAA (abdominal aortic aneurysm) screening</b> by ultrasound—recommended once for men ages 65–75 who have ever smoked. AAA is an enlarged, weak aorta (the large artery in the abdomen), which may require surgical treatment as it enlarges and the risk of rupture increases.</p>
<i>Age 70 and above</i>	
	<p><b>DEXA (bone density test)</b>—recommended for men at age 70.</p> <p><b>Yearly flu vaccine</b>—recommended.</p> <p>Other screening recommendations should be discussed with your doctor in this age range.</p>



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