

Don't skip your cancer screenings



For most of us, cancer screenings rank somewhere near root canals and tax returns on a list of fun things to do. And unlike tax returns, there's no IRS making you go to the doctor for a Pap test or colonoscopy – which means you're more likely to put it off. Plus, it can be hard to keep track of what you need to be screened for and when.

However, **cancer screenings can save your life**. So if you're a member of the "I'll do it next month" club, or you're not sure what screenings you need, it's time to get caught up. Check out the guidelines below, then call your doctor for an appointment.

Cancer screening guidelines

Here is an outline of the screenings you may need. Please discuss these guidelines with your doctor. Depending on factors such as your personal or family history, your doctor may modify your screening schedule.

Breast cancer

- *Beginning at age 40*, women should have a mammogram every one to two years and an annual clinical breast exam.
- Women of all ages should know how their breasts normally look and feel and report any breast change promptly to their doctor.

Colorectal cancer and polyps

From age 50 to 75, both men and women should have a:

- Yearly fecal occult blood test
- Flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years, *or* a colonoscopy every 10 years

Cervical cancer

For women up to age 49:

- Pap test and human papillomavirus (HPV) screening at least every three years, *starting at age 21* or within three years of becoming sexually active.

For women *age 50 and older*:

- Pap test at least every three years. After age 65, Pap tests can be discontinued if previous tests have been normal.

Endometrial (uterine) cancer

At the start of menopause, women should talk to their doctor about the risks and symptoms of endometrial cancer. Women should always report any unexpected bleeding or spotting to their doctors.

Prostate cancer

Men should talk to their doctor about their risks and screening for prostate cancer.

Call your doctor

Regular checkups and screenings are an important part of good health. If you haven't seen your doctor recently, call for an appointment today, so you can stay your healthiest.