

Health Awareness



Spring Screening: Six Health Screenings That Could Save Your Life

by Arthur Hayward, M.D.,
Geriatrician, Kaiser Permanente
(NAPSA)—As the percentage of
our older population increases,
health care providers appreciate
the need to stop disease before it
starts.

The Problem



Dr. Hayward

A recent study in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* found that U.S. baby boomers have higher rates of obesity and related health conditions than do members of the previous generation. While chronic diseases are among the most costly of all health problems, they are also the most preventable. So how does one begin to make sense of preventive care advisories when so many screenings are recommended at once?

An Answer

Here are the most-recommended screenings for keeping older adults healthy.

Cancer

While you may hear about many cancer screenings, colon cancer and breast cancer impact the highest number of people in the United States.

Both men and women ages 50 to 75 should be screened for colon cancer. Colorectal cancer is the third leading cause of death for both men and women, according to the American Cancer Society. One in 20 risk developing the disease. The easiest of several acceptable strategies is to take a fecal immunochemical test (FIT) at home every year, or every two years, to check for hidden blood in the stools.

Breast cancer is the second leading cause of death for women. One in eight will develop breast cancer in their lifetime. Women ages 50 to 74 are advised to have a mammogram every year or every two years.

Heart Health

Heart disease is the No. 1 killer of both sexes. The risk of heart disease can be reduced by maintaining a healthful diet and regular exercise. Even so, doctors highly recommend screening for risk factors of heart disease.

Six Health Screenings To Keep You Healthy As You Age*

For more information, visit kp.org

What to Screen	Who should screen	Screening age	How to screen
Colon Cancer	Men and women	50 - 75	Simplest: home fecal immunochemical test (FIT) every one to two years
Breast Cancer	Women	50 - 74	Mammogram every one to two years
Blood Pressure	Men and women	18 and older	BP is normally taken at clinic, but should be checked every two years at minimum
Cholesterol	Men and women	Initial test for all at age 20; repeat in Women, 40; Men, 35	Blood test
Diabetes (type 2)	Men and women	Based on risk factors	Fasting glucose plasma test or HbA1c blood test
Osteoporosis	Women	Women, 65; Men, consider at 70	Bone mineral density test

*These screenings are recommended for healthy adults, and calculated to preserve health into later years. If you or an immediate family member has a history of cancer, heart disease, other risk factors or other hereditary disease, your doctor may recommend screenings more regularly than are prescribed in this article. For questions or advice about a specific condition, always consult with your physician.



Most importantly, blood pressure, normally taken at the doctor's office, should be checked every two years at minimum for those 18 years and older. Though it often shows no symptoms, high blood pressure can damage vital organs—including your heart.

To keep your heart healthy, Kaiser Permanente doctors recommend members get their cholesterol checked by a blood test at age 20 or at their first visit after that age. Routine testing should next occur at age 35 for men and age 40 for women and afterwards on a schedule determined by results.

Screening for diabetes with a fasting glucose plasma test or an HbA1c blood test is recommended for those with other risk factors for heart disease.

High blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes are often associated with being overweight, and boomers surveyed in the study mentioned earlier had higher rates of all four conditions compared to an earlier generation. They also reported exercising less than those in that earlier generation, which is very likely related.

Osteoporosis and Bone Health

According to the National Osteoporosis Foundation, nearly 10 million Americans are living with osteoporosis. About half of all women over 50 will break a bone because of the disease.

Kaiser Permanente doctors who have researched osteoporosis have developed screening recommendations to find and treat affected members. Their guideline urges women to have routine osteoporosis screening at age 65 and repeat at age 70. The screening consists of a simple, noninvasive bone mineral density scan.

Kaiser Permanente has some of the best health screening rates in the nation, according to the 2012 National Committee for Quality Assurance's Quality Compass® data set. Our coordinated care and groundbreaking electronic health records allow us to be proactive in keeping our members up to date with their screenings. A little prevention can go a long way. Please check the table provided and make sure you've at least had these six screenings, which could save your life.