



The Importance of Preventive Check-ups

Your health is important.

Because the Youens and Duchicela Clinic believes this, a routine column will be brought to you in an effort to provide wellness information that you can use to help manage and maintain your health.

Each column will have a different focus; hopefully you will find each one both informative and encouraging as you gain a better awareness of your own personal health.

This week, the focus is on preventive check-ups.

A check-up can determine your present health status and can help you plan for your next scheduled appointment. It is important to undergo routine medical reviews, as these serve as important benchmarks in your medical history and are part of preventive care—stopping problems before they start.

Depending on your age and gender, your doctor will be able to guide you in determining when to begin a regular schedule of check-ups. Nonetheless, the start of each year is the most appropriate time to assess your health review schedule for the year.

But how do you know if it is time to have a preventive check-up if you have not been diagnosed with a chronic illness such as high blood pressure or diabetes?

Different national agencies such as the American College of Physicians (internal medicine), American Academy of Family Physicians (family medicine), and American College of Obstetrical and Gynecology (ob-gyn) do not have a consensus on the same age guidelines for preventive visits; therefore, it is important to visit with your doctor for an individual assessment of when preventive check-ups should take place.



No matter your age or gender, an evaluation may include screenings of different parts of your body. It may also include blood tests or imaging studies as well as possible procedures in a hospital.

At a check-up, you will need to be prepared to discuss with the doctor and/or the nurse

- **your family history**
- **past surgeries allergies**
- **tobacco, alcohol or illicit drug use**
- **any herbal or over-the-counter medicines or vitamins**

Routine medical check-ups have many benefits. Foremost, they help in establishing a person's medical history. That history is essential should a problem arise that needs attention, as these evaluations often include important screenings which can be used to detect problems early. Disease prevention and suggestions for lifestyle improvements are also important benefits to routine check-ups.

According to research in a Feb. 2008 article in the New England Journal of Medicine, tobacco, poor diet, physical inactivity, and misuse of alcohol have been estimated to be responsible for 900,000 deaths annually in the United States, which is nearly 40% of the country's yearly mortality rate. Some of these deaths could have been prevented through routine check-ups and medical care.

In these times of widespread financial distress, it makes the most sense to take care of your health to avoid increased, long-term medical costs. To this end, many health insurance companies cover annual visits, making these available at no additional cost to policy holders. Why not take advantage?

Remember that preventive check-ups are one key to living a healthy life.

The information provided here is not to be used as a substitute for medical attention. Remember that, should you have specific medical questions or desire more information, contact your doctor.