



Health tests for women

Chlamydia Screening

Why you need this:	Most females with this Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) have no symptoms, so they can pass it on to others without knowing it. When it is not treated, pelvic inflammatory disease can result. This can make a woman unable to get pregnant.
What to expect:	The doctor takes a urine test or uses a swab or brush to take a sample of cells from the infected area, such as the cervix or uterus. The sample is checked for the bacteria that causes chlamydia. It is also checked for gonorrhea at the same time because this STD has symptoms like that of chlamydia.
What the results mean:	If the test is positive, you have an active infection. The doctor will prescribe a course of antibiotics to treat chlamydia (or gonorrhea). Your sex partner(s) should be treated, too.

Breast Exam by Doctor or Nurse

Why you need this:	Screens for signs of breast problems, including cancer.
Before the test:	If you still menstruate, it is best to schedule the exam 3 or more days after your menstrual period. Your breasts are usually more swollen and tender the week before your period.
What to expect:	The doctor or nurse carefully feels your breasts and under your arms for lumps or anything else that seems unusual.
What the results mean:	If a lump or other problem is felt, the doctor may prescribe a mammogram or other follow up tests.

Bone Mineral Density Test (BMD)

Why you need this:	Osteoporosis occurs four times more often in women than in men. Get tested as often as advised by your doctor.
Before the test:	Dress in clothing that makes it comfortable to lie on a table.
What to expect:	A common and reliable method used is the Dexa-Scan (DXA). With your clothes on, you lie on a table. A low energy X-ray is taken of your hip and/or spine. Portable BMD screening devices are used to scan a heel or fingers. They are not as accurate as a DXA scan, but may be used at workplaces, health fairs, etc. Other ways to measure bone mineral density are CT scans, X-rays, and ultrasounds.
What the results mean:	Normal is a BMD value less than 1 standard deviation below the young adult mean. Osteopenia (low bone mass) is a BMD value between -1 and -2.5 standard deviation below the young adult mean. Osteoporosis is a BMD value at least -2.5 standard deviations below the young adult mean.





Pap Smear or Test	
Why you need this:	Checks for early signs of cervical cancer. In women older than 30, this test may be combined with a test for human papillomavirus (HPV), which is a common sexually transmitted infection that can also cause cervical cancer. In some cases, the HPV test may be done instead of a Pap test. A Pap test may also be done to check for other problems, such as swelling from irritation or infection.
Before the test:	If you still menstruate, schedule the test for a time you will not be having a menstrual period. Don't douche, tub-bathe, or use vaginal creams for 48 to 72 hours before the test. Avoid sex within 24 hours of the test.
What to expect:	You need to undress below the waist. You lie down on the exam table and put your feet in the stirrups attached to the bottom of the table. A device called a speculum is inserted into the vagina. A long swab is used to take a sample of cells from the cervical area. This does not usually hurt. You may feel a brief pinch. The sample is analyzed for abnormal cells.
What the results mean:	Results come back as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Negative</i> (normal). • <i>Unsatisfactory</i>. This means the cells could not be clearly identified or the sample was not adequate. The test needs to be repeated. • <i>Benign</i>. This means there are no cancer cells, but you may have an infection or irritation. • <i>Atypical cells</i>. One kind called ASCUS is suspect for an HPV infection. If the HPV test was not done at the same time as the Pap smear, your doctor can order a HPV test to check for HPV infection that has a high risk for cervical cancer. • <i>Low-grade changes</i>. This shows infection with HPV. If the HPV test was not done at the same time as the Pap smear, your doctor can order a HPV test to check for HPV infection that has a high risk for cervical cancer. • <i>High-grade changes</i>. This shows very atypical cells that may lead to cervical cancer. • <i>Squamous cell carcinoma</i>. Cancer is present. Treatment for it is needed.

Mammogram	
Why you need this:	Screens for signs of breast problems, including cancer.
Before the test:	Schedule the test at an approved testing facility. Find out from the National Cancer Institute at 800.4.CANCER (422.6237) or cancer.gov . If you still menstruate, try not to schedule the test during the week before a period. On the day of the test, don't wear lotions, powders, perfumes or deodorant. They can cause shadows on the X-ray pictures. Wear slacks or a skirt with a blouse or top, so you only need to undress from the waist up.
What to expect:	You will need to undress above the waist. You put on a gown that covers your front and back. The test is quick and easy: You stand up in front of the X-ray machine. The person who takes the X-rays places one breast between two plastic plates. The plates press your breast and make it flat. This can feel uncomfortable, but it lasts only seconds. The machine has an automatic release. The same test is done on the other breast. Then side images are taken for both breasts for a total of 4 X-rays.
What the results mean:	A radiologist reads the X-rays and sends the results to your doctor. A report is sent to you within 30 days. A normal result means the radiologist did not find anything that needs follow up. Continue to get screening mammograms. If the result is abnormal, it means the radiologist saw: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A change from a past mammogram. • A change that needs follow up. • Your doctor will order follow up tests, as needed, such as an ultrasound or an MRI. If one of these shows a solid mass, your doctor may prescribe a biopsy of the mass. <p>The good news is that about 80% of lumps are not cancerous.</p>



Be sure to ask your doctor about other tests you should have, such as tests for hepatitis B, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, colorectal cancer, and heart disease.



Pelvic Exam	
Why you need this:	Checks for problems on the outside of the vaginal area and inside the vagina and cervix.
Before the test:	Follow guidelines for Pap test/smear.
What to expect:	The doctor does a physical exam of the vaginal area. A Pap test/smear is usually done with a pelvic exam. The doctor may also insert a gloved and lubricated finger into the rectum. This can feel uncomfortable, but does not usually cause pain.
What the results mean:	If no problems are found, continue to have pelvic exams yearly or as advised by your doctor. If a problem is found, your doctor will prescribe follow-up tests or exams.