

## Wise words on women's health

May 30 2018

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(HealthDay)—May is Women's Health Month.

With that in mind, doctors are offering suggestions for steps that [women](#)

can take to reduce their risk of diseases and safeguard their health, both physical and mental.

Dr. Blanca Sckell is medical director of the Ambulatory Care Center and internal medicine program at NewYork-Presbyterian Queens, in New York City. She offered the following advice for women who are seeking ways to boost their health.

For starters, manage stress. Try to take a few minutes each day to relax. Meditation is a great way to cope with daily pressures and can also help improve your mental health.

Eat a healthy diet that includes fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, high-fiber foods and lean cuts of meat, poultry and fish. Cut back on processed foods. Healthy eating helps maintain proper weight, and lowers the risk of diabetes, [high blood pressure](#), heart [disease](#) and problems during pregnancy.

Talk to your doctor about when and how often to get screened for breast [cancer](#).

Get regular pelvic exams and Pap smear screenings to check for signs of vaginal and cervical cancers, and for [sexually transmitted diseases](#), such as human papillomavirus (HPV) or genital warts.

Women with a family history of certain diseases—including breast and ovarian cancer—may want to consider genetic testing.

Protect your skin from the sun. And check regularly for signs of skin cancer.

Ask your doctor about vaccinations for whooping cough, measles, mumps, HPV (the leading cause of [cervical cancer](#)), the flu, pneumonia

and shingles. Screening tests are available for HIV and hepatitis.

Get the recommended mix of cardio and resistance/weight-bearing exercise, which is at least 30 minutes a day, five days a week. Regular aerobic workouts such as walking, swimming, jogging, bicycling and dancing can help prevent heart disease, cancer, diabetes and osteoporosis.

Limit your alcohol consumption, don't smoke, and monitor your calcium intake. Too much absorbed calcium can increase the risk of kidney stones and may increase the risk of [heart disease](#). Women under 50 should get 1,000 milligrams a day, and women over 50 should get 1,200 milligrams a day, mainly through diet. Calcium-rich foods such as low-fat milk, salmon and almonds are recommended, and can help prevent osteoporosis.

About one in seven new mothers in the United States develops postpartum depression. If you are a new mom and have mood swings, trouble bonding with your baby or signs of depression that don't ease after a few weeks, see your doctor.

**More information:** The U.S. National Library of Medicine has more on [women's health](#).

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