

# Men: Here are the health screenings you need

June 5 2023, by Kirstie Ganobsik

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Many men will put off going to the doctor unless they are really sick, but men's health screenings help catch problems before symptoms appear.

So, how can you tell if a health screening or preventive care appointment is right for you?

The [U.S. National Institutes of Health](#) (NIH), the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and the [National Library of Medicine](#) offer several [men's health screening](#) and preventative care [recommendations](#).

Many of these recommendations are guided by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF), which is made up of experts in primary care and disease prevention.

Here's a comprehensive guide, based on this expert advice, to the most important men's health screenings you need—and how often you should go—to stay on top of your health.

## Physical exam

When to get it:

Start at age 18

How often:

Periodically or annually if aged 65 and older

Regular exams by your doctor are used to screen for current and potential medical issues. A [physical exam](#) may include:

- Checking your height, weight and body mass index
- Discussing [healthy lifestyle](#) practices
- Updating your vaccinations
- Talking about [health issues](#) or medical concerns you have
- Asking about your diet plan, exercise routine, and alcohol and

tobacco use

- Asking if you're experiencing any issues with [anxiety and depression](#)
- If you're aged 65 and older, checking your [blood pressure](#) annually, your cholesterol every five years and discussing your medications

## Colon cancer screening

When to get it:

Start at age 45 if you have a family history of colon polyps or cancer. Otherwise, ages 50 to 75.

How often:

A [stool-based test](#) every year. Your doctor may also recommend a stool DNA test every one to three years, a virtual colonoscopy every five years, a sigmoidoscopy every five to 10 years, and a colonoscopy at least every 10 years.

[Screenings for colorectal cancer](#) help your doctor determine if you have the disease or if precancerous polyps are present before symptoms occur.

The [CDC](#) notes that finding [colorectal cancer](#) or precancerous polyps at this early stage is important because this is when treatments are most likely to cure or prevent the disease.

## Lung cancer screening

When to get it:

Ages 50 to 80 if you smoke or stopped smoking within the past 15 years, plus have a [20-pack year](#) smoking history

How often:

Every year

According to the [CDC](#), more men (13.1%) than women (10.1%) in the United States smoked cigarettes in 2021.

"Smoking is one of the most dangerous health behaviors there is," Johns Hopkins University tobacco researcher [Dr. Johannes Thrul](#) said in a recent [NIH article](#).

The USPSTF notes that smoking and age are the two most important risk factors for developing lung cancer, which is why screenings using low-dose computed tomography (LDCT) are recommended annually.

Just like with colon cancer, the [CDC](#) says that early treatments for lung cancer have the best outcomes.

## **Blood pressure screening**

When to get it:

Ages 18 and older

How often:

Every year if:

- You have a first-degree relative with high [blood pressure](#)
- Your blood pressure reading is 120 to 129 mm Hg on top or 70

to 79 mm Hg on bottom, or higher

- You are Black
- You have diabetes, are overweight or have other health conditions that put you at increased risk for developing high blood pressure
- You're 65 or older

Every 3 to 5 years if:

- Your blood pressure is within the normal range (below 120 mm Hg on top and below 80 mm Hg on bottom) and you have no hypertension risk factors

"Only about half the people in the country who have high blood pressure are controlled to recommended levels. We could prevent a lot more heart attacks and strokes if more people had their blood pressure well controlled," [Dr. David Goff Jr.](#), director of cardiovascular sciences at the U.S. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, said in a recent [NIH article](#).

Blood pressure checks help ensure your blood pressure is under control. They allow your doctor to set you up on a treatment plan right away to reduce [high blood pressure](#) if it's found during screening.

## **Skin cancer screening**

When to get it:

Skin cancer behavioral counseling:

- Ages 18 to 24
- Ages 18 and older if you have fair skin

How often:

Periodically

Although the [USPSTF](#) didn't find enough evidence to indicate skin cancer screening outweighs the risk of testing, they do recommend skin cancer [behavioral counseling](#) for both young adults and all adults with fair skin. This education is aimed at ensuring people limit their exposure to ultraviolet radiation, which increases the risk of developing the disease.

The [U.S. National Cancer Institute](#) notes that your doctor can help you determine if and how often you need skin [cancer](#) screening based on your risk factors for developing the condition and your past medical history.

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Citation: Men: Here are the health screenings you need (2023, June 5) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-06-men-health-screenings.html>

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