

# Annual Well-Woman Exam



A well-woman exam is an additional checkup for individuals that focuses on the female reproductive system and sexual health. Well-woman exams don't replace routine health checkups or annual physicals, but your doctor often can do both checkups at the same time. Some individuals decide to see a gynecologist for their well-woman exams.

**Below are the top reasons why you should schedule your well-woman exam today.**

## Birth Control

Family planning is an essential part of healthcare for pre-menopausal individuals. Did you know that many people can unexpectedly conceive well into their 40s? It's important to keep your healthcare provider updated on your contraception needs so they can help find the right birth control method for you.

## Cancer Screenings

Regular breast cancer and cervical cancer screenings are your best chance to detect cancer early. According to the American Cancer Society, when breast cancer is detected early and hasn't spread, the five-year relative survival rate is 99%. It's important to do monthly self-exams in addition to regular breast cancer exams and mammograms.

## Health Screenings

All individuals should have a general health check each year. This checkup is often referred to as an annual physical. Routine visits with your healthcare provider can help find problems early, and even prevent health problems before they occur. If problems are found early, they may be easier to treat and less likely to pose serious risks to your health.

## Vaccinations

Your healthcare provider should offer vaccines so that you can stay healthy and keep doing the things you love. The leading cause of cervical cancer is HPV, which can be easily prevented with the HPV vaccine. The HPV vaccine is widely considered to be safe and effective. Talk with your doctor about the vaccines you may need, such as:

- Influenza (flu)
- Varicella (chickenpox)
- Measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR)
- Tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis (Td/Tdap)



## Preconception Counseling

Thinking about welcoming a new family member? Your annual well-woman exam is a great chance to take advantage of conception and preconception support. Your doctor can talk with you about your diet, lifestyle, stress, health conditions, and any other factors that could affect your chance of becoming pregnant. They can also counsel you on your long-term health — and the future health of your baby.

## Concerns About Sex

Your healthcare provider is a trained clinician available to listen if you have any concerns about sex, such as painful intercourse, changes in sex drive, or any issues that may be affecting your sex life. Your doctor is here to listen and help, and everything you say will be confidential. Additionally, if you feel that you are a victim of sexual or domestic abuse, your healthcare provider should have resources available to get you the help you need.

## STI Screenings

If you're sexually active, especially with multiple partners, you may have questions about your risk for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and when to get tested. Many STIs have no initial symptoms and can increase your risk for cervical cancer, so it's important to get tested regularly.

## Menstrual Issues

Menstrual disorders are problems that affect an individual's normal menstrual cycle. They include painful cramps during menstruation, abnormally heavy bleeding, irregular bleeding, or no bleeding.

## Depression Screening

Your doctor cares about more than just your physical health. They also need to know about your emotional and psychological health. Depression is among the leading causes of disability in people ages 15 and older. It affects individuals, families, businesses, and even society, and it is common in patients seen in the primary care setting. Depression is also common in postpartum and pregnant individuals and can affect not only the parent but the child as well.

If you think you may be dealing with depression, you are not alone. Talk with your doctor about how you are feeling so they can help make a treatment plan that works for you.

## Other Reasons

Your healthcare provider can discuss any other issues, questions, or concerns you may have during your visit. Some things you might like to talk about include your health goals, use of medicines or vitamins, home life and relationships, and menstrual health.