

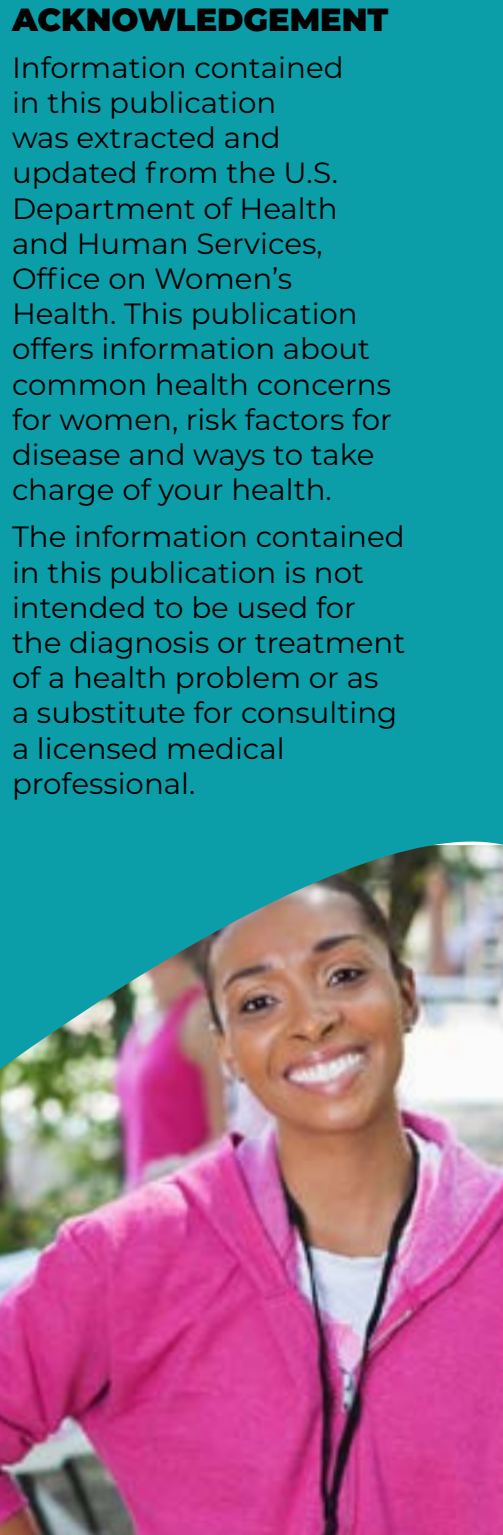
# WOMEN:

**Take Charge of  
Your Health**



MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH &  
SENIOR SERVICES**

Office on Women's Health



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Information contained in this publication was extracted and updated from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health. This publication offers information about common health concerns for women, risk factors for disease and ways to take charge of your health.

The information contained in this publication is not intended to be used for the diagnosis or treatment of a health problem or as a substitute for consulting a licensed medical professional.



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# How to Take Charge of Your Health

When it comes to your health and well-being you need to think not only about your body, but your mind and spirit too. Everything about you and your life matters, and deserves your time and attention. Schedule time for fitness, shopping for and preparing healthy meals, “down time” to relax and have fun and a checkup with your doctor. Doing so will help you balance your own health and wellness needs with your everyday commitments.

## Understanding risk factors

Part of learning how to take charge of your health involves understanding your risk factors for different diseases.

Risk factors are things in your life that increase your chances of getting a condition or disease. Some risk factors are beyond your control, such as your age, sex, family history, race or ethnicity, or health problems you may have. Risk factors you can control include:

- What and how much you eat.
- Level of physical activity.
- Tobacco and illegal drug use.
- Alcohol consumption.
- Unprotected sexual activity.
- Seatbelt usage.
- Not taking medications as directed.

You can have one risk factor for a disease or you can have many. For some diseases, the more risk factors you have, the more likely you are to get the disease. How do you find out what risk factors you have? Schedule a general checkup, and ask your doctor or nurse about your personal health risks and what you can do to lower your risks.

## Steps to healthy living

Together, the powerful steps that follow will help you to take charge of your health and control many risk factors for disease.

### Know your health care options:

- If you have health insurance, learn about your benefits and preventive services.
- If you need health insurance, Healthcare.gov to learn what options you have under the new health care reform law.

### Get important tests and vaccines

- Ask your doctor or nurse what screening tests and vaccines you need and how often you need them. Screening tests can help

find health problems early, such as high blood pressure, breast cancer, cervical cancer, colorectal cancer and bone loss. Vaccines can protect you from harmful infections, such as the flu and human papillomavirus (HPV).

See the chart on pages 12-15, which lists important screening tests for women. Find out what vaccines you might need at **Vaccines.gov**.

## Eat healthy

- Balance calories to manage body weight. If you are overweight, enjoy your food, but eat less and avoid oversized portions
- Eat mainly:
  - Fruits and vegetables (make half of your plate fruits and vegetables);
    - Grains (at least half of your grains should be whole grains, such as





whole wheat, oatmeal and brown rice);

Fat-free or low-fat (1%)

milk, cheese, yogurt and other milk products;

- Lean sources of protein, including more fish, as well as beans and peas, unsalted nuts, eggs, skinless poultry, lean meat and soy products; and
- Polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats.
- Cut back on sodium. Compare sodium in foods like soup, bread, and frozen meals and choose the foods with lower numbers.
- Limit foods that contain saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol or added sugars.
- Drink water instead of sugary drinks like soda and energy drinks.
- Choose foods that provide more potassium, dietary fiber, calcium and vitamin D.
- Use food labels to make healthy food choices.
- Visit **ChooseMyPlate.gov** for tips to build a healthy plate at meal times and adopt healthy eating habits.

## Get enough folic acid

- If you are planning to get pregnant, or are able to get pregnant, you need 400 to 800 micrograms (400 to 800 mcg or 0.4 to 0.8 mg) of folic acid every day, even if you are using birth control or not planning for pregnancy. You can make sure you get enough by taking a vitamin with folic acid every day.

## Get moving

- Pick an aerobic activity that's easy to fit into your life. Aerobic activities make you breathe harder and your heart beat faster. If



you choose activities at a moderate level, do at least two hours and 30 minutes a week. Walking fast, dancing and raking leaves are examples of activities that take moderate effort. If you choose vigorous activities, do at least one hour and 15 minutes each week. Jogging, jumping rope, swimming laps and riding a bike on hills are examples of vigorous activity. You can combine moderate and vigorous activities. Do aerobic activities for at least 10 minutes at a time.

- Do muscle-strengthening activities on two or more days each week. Include all major muscle groups.
- Start slowly if you have been inactive and do a little more as you are able. You can build up by being active more often or longer, or by increasing your effort.
- Talk to your doctor if you have a chronic health problem to find out what physical activities are good for you.

## Quit smoking

- The minute you quit smoking, your health begins to improve and you begin to lower your long-

term risk of many serious diseases. See page 40 for tips to help you quit smoking for good.

## Keep your teeth and gums healthy

- Brush your teeth with fluoride toothpaste at least twice daily.
- Floss your teeth daily.
- Get regular checkups. Ask your dentist how often you need a dental exam.

## Limit alcohol

- If you choose to drink alcohol, do so in moderation. For women, that means no more than one drink per day. One drink equals:
  - 12 fluid ounces of regular beer;
  - 5 fluid ounces of wine; or
  - 1.5 fluid ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits.

## Get enough sleep

- Aim for seven to nine hours of sleep every night.

## Manage stress

- Set realistic standards and goals.
- Make time each day to relax and unwind, even if only for a few minutes.

- Reach out to people who encourage and support you. Ask for help when needed.
- Find outlets, such as a hobby or volunteer work.
- Learn healthy ways to cope with daily stress.
- Talk to your doctor if emotional problems interfere with daily living.
- If you are having thoughts about suicide or hurting yourself, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255).

## Practice safe sex

- Keep in mind that you cannot tell if a person has a sexually transmitted infection (STI) by the way he or she looks. Many STIs have no symptoms.
- Be faithful. Having sex with one uninfected partner who only has sex with you will lower your risk of getting an STI.
- Use a condom correctly and every time you have vaginal, anal or oral sex to lower your risk of STIs. Most other birth control methods do not protect against STIs.
- Women 26 and younger can get the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, which protects

against the types of HPV that cause most cases of cervical cancer and genital warts.

- Ask your doctor if you should be tested for STIs and when you should be retested.

## Know your HIV status

- If you have risk factors for HIV, get tested. Some risk factors are having unprotected sex with multiple partners or being treated for an STI. All pregnant women need to be tested for HIV.

## Practice sun safety

- Apply sunscreen that is at least SPF15 and that blocks both UVA and UVB rays (broad spectrum).
- Avoid sun exposure between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Sunscreen isn't enough. Also wear a hat, protective clothing and sunglasses to help block the sun's harmful rays.
- Tell your doctor about any new moles or mole changes you notice.



## Stay safe

- If you are a victim of sexual assault or violence and abuse in your home, you are not alone — call for help. The following hotlines are available 24 hours a day:
  - National Domestic Violence Hotline 800-799-SAFE (7233) TDD: 800-787-3224



- National Sexual Assault Hotline 800-656-HOPE (4673)
- To learn more about these types of violence, as well as stalking, dating violence and more visit [womenshealth.gov/relationships-and-safety](https://www.womenshealth.gov/relationships-and-safety).
- If you find yourself in danger try to find a safe place away from your attacker. Then call 911 or the police.
- Remember, the victim is never at fault.

## Use medicines as directed

- Follow the label information carefully. Learn about drug labels on pages 34-35.
- Use your prescription medicine only as directed. Do not stop taking your medicine until your doctor tells you it's okay to stop.
- Tell your doctor about all the over-the-counter and prescription medicines you use. Also, tell your doctor about any vitamins, diet supplements and herbs you use. This is especially important if you are or are planning to become pregnant.

## Breastfeed your baby

If you are a mother, one of the best things that only you can do for your baby is to breastfeed.

Breastfeeding is more than a lifestyle choice — it is an important health choice. Breastfeeding is linked to a lower risk of many health problems for both baby and mother. It can be very convenient, and is a great bonding experience with your baby. It can also be challenging, but many people can offer support and help you:

- To speak with a trained breastfeeding peer counselor, call the Office on

Women's Health at 800-994-9662 (TDD: 888-220-5446).

- For hands-on help, contact a lactation consultant. To find one in your area, visit [ilca.org](http://ilca.org).

*The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding explains why breastfeeding is a national public health priority and sets forth actionable steps that businesses, communities, health systems and others can take to support nursing mothers. Learn more at [surgeongeneral.gov](http://surgeongeneral.gov). Under the Affordable Care Act more women will have access to breastfeeding support and workplace protections.*

Visit

[WomensHealth.gov/breastfeeding](http://WomensHealth.gov/breastfeeding)  
for information and tips.





# Screening Tests for Women

Check the guidelines listed here to find out about important screening tests for women. These guidelines are recommended by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. Keep in mind that these are guidelines only. Your doctor or nurse will personalize the timing

of the screening tests you need based on many factors. Ask your doctor or nurse if you don't understand why a certain test is recommended for you. Check with your insurance plan to find out which tests are covered.

## **Body Mass Index (BMI)**

BMI is an inexpensive and easy-to-perform method of screening for weight categories that may lead to health problems. You can find out your BMI by using the calculator at [CDC.gov/bmi](https://www.cdc.gov/bmi).

# Screening Tests for Women

Screening tests	Ages 18-39	Ages 40-49	Ages 50-64	Ages 65 and older
<b>Blood pressure test</b>	Get tested at least every 2 years if you have normal blood pressure (lower than 120/80).  Get tested once a year if you have blood pressure between 120/80 and 139/89.  Discuss treatment with your doctor or nurse if you have blood pressure 140/90 or higher.	Get tested at least every 2 years if you have normal blood pressure (lower than 120/80).  Get tested once a year if you have blood pressure between 120/80 and 139/89.  Discuss treatment with your doctor or nurse if you have blood pressure 140/90 or higher.	Get tested at least every 2 years if you have normal blood pressure (lower than 120/80).  Get tested once a year if you have blood pressure between 120/80 and 139/89.  Discuss treatment with your doctor or nurse if you have blood pressure 140/90 or higher.	Get tested at least every 2 years if you have normal blood pressure (lower than 120/80).  Get tested once a year if you have blood pressure between 120/80 and 139/89.  Discuss treatment with your doctor or nurse if you have blood pressure 140/90 or higher.
<b>Bone mineral density test</b> (osteoporosis screening)			Discuss with your doctor or nurse if you are at risk of osteoporosis.	Get this test at least once at age 65 or older.  Talk to your doctor or nurse about repeat testing.

Screening tests	Ages 18-39	Ages 40-49	Ages 50-64	Ages 65 and older
<b>Breast cancer screening</b> (mammogram)		Discuss with your doctor or nurse.	Starting at age 50, get screened every 2 years.	Get screened every 2 years through age 74.  Age 75 and older, ask your doctor or nurse if you need to be screened.
<b>Cervical cancer screening</b> (Pap test)	Get a Pap test every 3 years if you are 21 or older and have a cervix. If you are 30 or older, you can get a Pap test and HPV test together every 5 years.	Get a Pap test and HPV test together every 5 years if you have a cervix.	Get a Pap test and HPV test together every 5 years if you have a cervix.	Ask your doctor or nurse if you need to get a Pap test.
<b>Chlamydia test</b>	Get tested for chlamydia yearly until age 24 if you are sexually active or pregnant. Age 25 and older, get tested for chlamydia if you are at increased risk, pregnant or not.	Get tested for chlamydia if you are sexually active and at increased risk, pregnant or not pregnant.	Get tested for chlamydia if you are sexually active and at increased risk.	Get tested for chlamydia if you are sexually active and at increased risk.

Screening tests	Ages 18-39	Ages 40-49	Ages 50-64	Ages 65 and older
<b>Cholesterol test</b>	Starting at age 20, get a cholesterol test regularly if you are at increased risk for heart disease. Ask your doctor or nurse how often you need your cholesterol tested.	Get a cholesterol test regularly if you are at increased risk for heart disease. Ask your doctor or nurse how often you need your cholesterol tested.	Get a cholesterol test regularly if you are at increased risk for heart disease. Ask your doctor or nurse how often you need your cholesterol tested.	Get a cholesterol test regularly if you are at increased risk for heart disease. Ask your doctor or nurse how often you need your cholesterol tested.
<b>Colorectal cancer screening</b> (using fecal occult blood testing, sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy)			Starting at age 50, get screened for colorectal cancer. Talk to your doctor or nurse about which screening test is best for you and how often you need it.	Get screened for colorectal cancer through age 75. Talk to your doctor or nurse about which screening test is best for you and how often you need it.
<b>Diabetes screening</b>	Get screened for diabetes if your blood pressure is higher than 135/80 or if you take medicine for high blood pressure.	Get screened for diabetes if your blood pressure is higher than 135/80 or if you take medicine for high blood pressure.	Get screened for diabetes if your blood pressure is higher than 135/80 or if you take medicine for high blood pressure.	Get screened for diabetes if your blood pressure is higher than 135/80 or if you take medicine for high blood pressure.



Screening tests	Ages 18-39	Ages 40-49	Ages 50-64	Ages 65 and older
<b>Gonorrhea test</b>	Get tested for gonorrhea if you are sexually active and at increased risk, pregnant or not pregnant.	Get tested for gonorrhea if you are sexually active and at increased risk, pregnant or not pregnant.	Get tested for gonorrhea if you are sexually active and at increased risk.	Get tested for gonorrhea if you are sexually active and at increased risk.
<b>HIV test</b>	Get tested for HIV at least once. Discuss your risk with your doctor or nurse because you may need more frequent tests. All pregnant women need to be tested for HIV.	Get tested for HIV at least once. Discuss your risk with your doctor or nurse because you may need more frequent tests. All pregnant women need to be tested for HIV.	Get tested for HIV at least once. Discuss your risk with your doctor or nurse because you may need more frequent tests.	Get tested for HIV at least once if you are age 65 and have never been tested. Get tested if you are at increased risk for HIV. Discuss your risk with your doctor or nurse.
<b>Syphilis test</b>	Get tested for syphilis if you are at increased risk or pregnant.	Get tested for syphilis if you are at increased risk or pregnant.	Get tested for syphilis if you are at increased risk.	Get tested for syphilis if you are at increased risk.

Guidelines as of May 2013



# Symptoms of Serious Health Problems

- The following symptoms could be signs of serious health problems and should be checked by a doctor or nurse. Be aware that you might have symptoms in one part of your body that could actually mean a problem in another part. Even if the symptoms don't seem related, they could be. Keep track of your symptoms. If you have any of these symptoms, schedule a checkup with your doctor or seek medical help right away if it's an emergency. Listen to what your body is telling you, and be sure to describe every symptom in detail to your doctor.

## Symptoms of a heart attack

The most common sign of a heart attack is mild or strong pain or discomfort in the center of the chest. It can last more than a few minutes, or it can go away and come back.

Other common signs of a heart attack include:

- Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, back, neck, jaw or stomach
- Shortness of breath (feeling like you can't get enough air)
- Nausea or vomiting with a feeling of impending doom
- Feeling faint or woozy because of chest pain

- Breaking out in a cold sweat
- Extreme tiredness and feeling like you cannot exercise.

**Warning:** Some women may feel very tired, sometimes for days or weeks before a heart attack occurs. Women may also have heartburn, a cough, heart flutters or lose their appetite. Visit [WomensHealth.gov/heartattack](http://WomensHealth.gov/heartattack).

## Symptoms of a stroke

A stroke happens fast. Even if you have signs of a stroke that get better, call 911 right away. The most common signs of a stroke are sudden:

- Numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body.
- Trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- Trouble walking, dizziness or loss of balance or coordination.
- Confusion or trouble speaking or understanding.
- Severe headache with no known cause.

If you have any of these symptoms or see anyone with these symptoms, call 911 right away. Don't let anyone tell you that you are overreacting or to wait and see. Treatment for heart attack and stroke should be started right away. It's better to be safe than sorry!

## Symptoms of lung problems

- Coughing up blood or mucus.
- Shortness of breath.
- Wheezing.
- A cough that won't go away.
- Uncomfortable or painful breathing.
- A feeling of tightness in the chest.

## Symptoms of muscle or joint problems

- Muscle pains and body aches that don't go away, or that come and go often..
- Numbness, tingling (pins-and-needles sensation) or discomfort in hands, feet or limbs.
- Pain, stiffness, swelling or redness in or around joints.

## Symptoms of reproductive health problems

- Bleeding or spotting between periods.
- Itching, burning or irritation (including bumps, blisters or sores) of the vagina or genital area.
- Pain or discomfort during sex.
- Severe or painful bleeding with periods.
- Moderate to severe pelvic or abdominal pain.
- Unusual (for you) vaginal discharge of any type or color or with strong odor.
- Pain or other problems while urinating or moving bowels.

## Symptoms of breast problems

- Hard lump or knot in or near the breast or in your underarm.
- Dimpling, puckering or ridges of the skin on the breast.
- Change in the size or shape of your breast.
- Clear or bloody fluid that leaks out of the nipple.
- Itchy or scaly sore or rash on the nipple.
- Unusual swelling, warmth or redness.

## Symptoms of mental health problems

- Anxiety and constant worry.
- Depression (feeling empty, sad all the time or worthless).
- Extreme fatigue, even when rested.
- Extreme tension that can't be explained.
- Flashbacks and nightmares about traumatic events.
- No interest in getting out of bed or doing regular activities, including eating or sex.
- Thoughts about suicide and death.
- Seeing or hearing things that aren't there (hallucinations).
- Having trouble falling or staying asleep.
- "Baby blues" that haven't gone away two weeks after giving birth and seem to get worse over time.
- Thoughts about harming yourself or your child.
- Desire to starve or vomit on purpose.
- Desire to binge on food excessively.
- Routinely consuming more than one alcoholic drink per day.

## Symptoms of stomach or digestive problems

- Bleeding from the rectum.
- Blood or mucus in the stool (including diarrhea) or stools are not the normal brown color.
- Change in bowel habits or not being able to control bowels;
- Constipation, diarrhea or both.
- Heartburn or acid reflux (feels like burning in throat or mouth).
- Stomach pain or discomfort, such as bloating.
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Unexplained weight loss or weight gain.

## Symptoms of bladder problems

- Difficult or painful urination;
- Frequent urination, intense urges to urinate or loss of bladder control.
- Urine that is bloody, cloudy, dark or strong smelling.
- Long-term pain in the back or sides.

## Symptoms of skin problems

- Changes in the skin, such as changes in existing moles or new growths.
- Moles that are no longer round or have irregular borders.
- Moles that change colors or change in size (usually get bigger).
- Frequent flushing (a sudden feeling of heat).
- Painful, crusting, scaling or oozing sores that don't heal
- Skin burns easily or breaks out in rash from sun exposure.





## *Fighting the Flu*

“Flu” refers to sickness caused by influenza viruses, such as seasonal flu and H1N1. Most healthy people recover from the flu without problems. But certain people are at high risk of serious complications. Some people may even die from the flu.

Flu symptoms may include:

- Fever.
- Coughing.
- Sore throat;
- Runny or stuffy nose.
- Headache.
- Body aches.
- Chills.
- Fatigue.

Some people may also have vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with the flu and have respiratory symptoms without a fever.

Annual outbreaks of flu usually occur during the late fall through early spring in the United States. Flu is contagious, which means it spreads from person to person. The flu vaccine offers the best protection against getting sick with the flu.



## Steps you can take to prevent flu:

- Get a yearly seasonal flu vaccine as soon as it is available. All people six months of age and older should get a yearly flu vaccine.
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water often and especially after you cough or sneeze. You also can use alcohol-based hand cleansers.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the used tissue away.

## If you get the flu:

- Ask your doctor if flu antivirals are right for you. These are prescription medicines that can make your flu symptoms milder and prevent flu complications. These drugs are not substitutes for getting the yearly flu vaccine.
- Stay home until at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever (100° F or

37.8° C and above) without the use of fever-reducing medicines.

## What is a flu pandemic?

A pandemic is a global outbreak of a disease. A flu pandemic can happen when a new flu virus appears that people have little or no immunity (protection) against. This can happen when influenza viruses in pigs or birds cross over to humans. A new flu virus can spread quickly from person to person across the country and around the world in a very short time. The severity of pandemics can vary depending on the virus causing illness. You can prepare for pandemic flu like you would prepare for an emergency or a time when you might need to stay home for one to two weeks. Take these steps and see page 36 for more on emergency planning:

- Gather supplies. Keep enough food, water, medicine and other supplies to last two weeks.
- Make a plan, such as what to do if schools are closed or several family members are sick.
- Prevent the spread of germs.



# Act Now: Get Healthy Before Pregnancy

A healthy pregnancy begins long before you even think about motherhood. If you are a woman of childbearing age, take a moment to learn what you can do now to make sure your body is prepared for any future pregnancies.

## Folic acid

Folic acid is a B vitamin. It helps the body make healthy new cells. All people need folic acid, but folic acid is especially important for women who are able to get pregnant. When a woman has enough folic acid in her body before and during pregnancy, it can prevent major birth defects of the brain and spine, including spina bifida.

All women able to get pregnant need 400 to 800 micrograms (400 to 800 mcg or 0.4 to 0.8 mg) of folic acid every day, even if they are not planning to get pregnant or are using birth control. This is because birth defects of the brain and spine occur in the very early stages of pregnancy, often before a woman knows she is pregnant. By the time she finds out she is pregnant, it might be too late to prevent those birth defects.

## Preconception health

Getting enough folic acid is one important part of good preconception health. Preconception health is

a woman's health before pregnancy. It involves knowing how health conditions and risk factors you have could affect you or your unborn baby if you get pregnant. For instance, some foods, habits, health problems and medicines can harm your baby — even before he or she is conceived.

Every woman should be thinking about her health whether or not she is planning pregnancy. One reason is that half of all pregnancies are not planned. Another reason is that poor birth outcomes continue to be a problem in the United States. In fact, 1 in 8 babies are born too early. By taking action on health issues and risks before pregnancy, you can lower your risk of problems that might affect you or your baby later. Ask your doctor about:

- Family planning and birth control.
- Taking folic acid.
- Vaccines and screenings you may need, such as a Pap test and screenings for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV.

- Managing health problems, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, thyroid disease, obesity, depression, eating disorders and asthma. Find out how pregnancy may affect, or be affected by, health problems you have.
- Medicines you use, including over-the-counter, herbal, and prescription drugs and supplements.
- Ways to improve your overall health, such as reaching a healthy weight, making healthy food choices, being physically active, caring for your teeth and gums, reducing stress, quitting smoking and avoiding alcohol.
- How to avoid illness.
- Hazards in your workplace or home that could harm you or your baby.
- Health problems that run in your or your partner's family.
- Problems you have had with prior pregnancies.
- Family concerns that could affect your health, such as domestic violence or lack of support.



## ***Tell us what you think today!***

Do you reference this resource regularly? We would love to hear more about how it helped you, or the ways we can improve this publication, through a brief survey.



# How to Talk to Your Doctor or Nurse

Waiting in your doctor's office can make you feel nervous, impatient or even scared. You might worry about what's wrong with you. You might feel annoyed because you're not getting other things done. Then when you see your doctor or nurse, the visit seems to be so short. You might have only a few minutes to explain your symptoms and concerns. Later that day, you might remember something you forgot to ask. You wonder if your question and its answer matter. Knowing how to talk to your doctor, nurse or other members of your health care team will help you get the information you need.

## Tips: What to do

- **List your questions and concerns.** Before your appointment, make a list of what you want to ask. When you're in the waiting room, review your list and organize your thoughts. You can share the list with your doctor or nurse.
- **Describe your symptoms.** Say when these problems started. Say how they make you feel. If you know, say what sets them off or triggers them. Say what you've done to feel better.
- **Give your doctor a list of your medications or bring them to your checkup.** Tell what prescription drugs

and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, herbal products and other supplements you're using.

- **Be honest about your diet, physical activity, smoking, alcohol or drug use and sexual history.** Not sharing information with your doctor or nurse can be harmful!
- **Describe any allergies to drugs, foods, pollen or other things.** Don't forget to mention if you are being treated by other doctors, including mental health professionals.
- **Talk about sensitive topics.** Your doctor or nurse has probably heard it before! Don't leave something out because you're worried about taking up too much time. Be sure to talk about all of your concerns before you leave. If you don't understand the answers your doctor gives you, ask again.
- **Ask questions about any tests and your test results.** Get instructions on what you need to do to get ready for the test(s). Ask if there are any dangers or side effects. Ask how you can learn the test results. Ask how long it will take to get the results.

- **Ask questions about your condition or illness.** When your illness is diagnosed, ask your doctor how you can learn more about it. What caused it? Is it permanent? What can you do to help yourself feel better? How can it be treated?
- **Tell your doctor or nurse if you are pregnant or intend to become pregnant.** Some medicines may not be safe for you or your baby. Other medicines should be used with caution if you are pregnant or about to become pregnant.
- **Ask your doctor about any treatments he or she recommends.** Be sure to ask about all of your options for treatment. Ask how long the treatment will last. Ask if it has any side effects. Ask how much it will cost. Ask if it is covered by your health insurance.
- **Ask your doctor about any medicines he or she prescribes for you.** Make sure you understand how to use your medicine. What should you do if you miss a dose? Are there any foods, drugs or activities you should avoid when using the medicine? Is there a generic brand of the drug



you can use? You can also ask your pharmacist if a generic drug is available for your medication.

- **Ask more questions if you don't understand something.** If you are not clear about what your doctor or nurse is asking you to do or why, ask to have it explained again.
- **Bring a family member or trusted friend with you.** That person can take

notes, offer moral support and help you remember what was discussed. You can have that person ask questions too!

- **Call before your visit to tell them if you have special needs.** If you don't speak or understand English well, the office may need to find an interpreter. If you have a disability, ask if they can accommodate you.





# How to Get a Second Opinion

Even though doctors may get similar medical training, they can have their own opinions and thoughts about how to practice medicine. They can have different ideas about how to diagnose and treat conditions or diseases. Some doctors take a more conservative, or traditional, approach to treating their patients. Other doctors are more aggressive and use the newest tests and therapies. It seems like we learn about new advances in medicine almost every day.

Many doctors specialize in one area of medicine, such as cardiology or obstetrics or psychiatry. Not every doctor

can be skilled in using all the latest technology. Getting a second opinion from a different doctor might give you another viewpoint and new information. It could provide you with new options for treating your condition. Then you can make more informed choices. If you get similar opinions from two doctors, you can also talk with a third doctor.

## Tips: What to do

- **Ask your doctor for a recommendation.** Ask for the name of another doctor or specialist, so you can get a second opinion. Don't worry about hurting your doctor's feelings.

Most doctors welcome a second opinion, especially when surgery or long-term treatment is involved.

- **Ask someone you trust for a recommendation.** If you don't feel comfortable asking your doctor for a referral, then call another doctor you trust. You can also call university teaching hospitals and medical societies in your area for the names of doctors. Some of this information is also available on the Internet.
- **Check with your health insurance provider.** Call your insurance company before you get a second opinion. Ask if they will pay for this office visit. Many health insurance providers do. Ask if there are any special procedures you or your primary care doctor need to follow.
- **Ask to have medical records sent to the second doctor.** Ask your primary care doctor to send your medical records to the new doctor. You need to give written permission to your current doctor to send any records or test results to a new doctor. You can also ask for a copy of your own medical records for your

files. Your new doctor can then examine these records before your office visit.

- **Learn as much as you can.** Ask your doctor for information you can read. Go to a local library. Search the Internet for reliable government and health organizations, such as **WomensHealth.gov**, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the American Heart Association. Find a teaching hospital or university that has medical libraries open to the public. The information you find can be hard to understand, or just confusing. Make a list of your questions, and bring it with you when you see your new doctor.
- **Do not rely just on the Internet or a telephone conversation.** To get a second opinion, you need to be seen by a doctor. That doctor will perform a physical examination and perhaps other tests. The doctor will also thoroughly review your medical records, ask you questions and address your concerns.



# How to Read Drug Labels

Medicines, or drugs, come as either prescription or over-the-counter (OTC). Prescription drugs are used under a doctor's care. OTC drugs can be purchased without a doctor's prescription at a drugstore or grocery store. When using any kind of drug, it is important to read the label information.

Not following the information given can cause unwanted side effects or make the drug not work. Read the label each time you buy a drug, just in case the information has changed since the last time you used it. If you read the label and still have questions, call your doctor, nurse or pharmacist for help.

Pharmacy name and address

Number used by the drugstore to identify this drug for your refills

Person who should take drug

Instructions about how often and when to take this drug

Name of drug and strength of drug

Number of refills before certain date

Doctor's name

Drugstore phone number

Prescription fill date



Don't use this drug past this date

# Over-the-Counter (OTC) Medicine Label

**Drug Facts**

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**Active ingredient (in each tablet)**

**Purpose**  
Chlorpheniramine maleate 2 mg.....Antihistamine

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**Uses** temporarily relieves these symptoms due to hay fever or other upper respiratory allergies

- sneezing
- runny nose
- itchy, water eyes
- itchy throat

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**Warnings**  
**Ask a doctor before use if you have**

- glaucoma
- a breathing problem such as emphysema or chronic bronchitis
- trouble urinating due to an enlarged prostate gland

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**Ask a doctor or pharmacist before use if you are taking tranquilizers or sedatives**

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**When using this product**

- You may get drowsy
- Avoid alcoholic drinks
- Alcohol, sedatives and tranquilizers may increase drowsiness
- Be careful when driving a motor vehicle or operating machinery
- Excitability may occur, especially in children

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**If pregnant or breastfeeding, ask a health professional before use.**  
**Keep out of reach of children.** In case of overdose, get medical help or contact a Poison Control Center right away.

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<b>Directions</b>	
Adults and children 12 years and over	Take 2 tablets every 4 to 6 hours; not more than 12 tablets in 24 hours
Children 6 years to under	Take 1 tablet every 4 to 6 hours; not more than 6 tablets in 24 hours
Children under 6 years	Ask a doctor

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**Other information** Store at 20-25°C (68-77°F)

- Protect from excessive moisture

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**Inactive ingredients** D&C yellow no. 10, lactose, magnesium stearate, microcrystalline cellulose, pregelatinized starch

Therapeutic substance in drug

Product type

Symptoms or diseases the drug treats

When not to use this drug, when to stop taking it, when to see a doctor and possible side effects

Read carefully: how much to take, how often to take it and when to stop taking it

More information on how to store the drug

Other things in the drug, such as colors or flavorings



# How to Be Prepared for Emergencies

When disaster strikes, you may not have much time to act. Take simple steps now to prepare your family for sudden emergencies or other disasters.

## Three basic steps for disaster or emergency preparedness

**1. Get a kit.** Relief workers will most likely be on the scene after a disaster, but they cannot reach everyone right away. Pack a disaster supplies kit that your family can use at home or on the go. A basic kit includes these survival items:

- **Water.** Keep at least a three-day supply of water for each person and pet. Each person and pet needs

one gallon of water each day.

- **Food.** Store at least a three-day supply of food that will not spoil, such as canned meat, beans, vegetables, fruit and juices; peanut butter or other high-energy food; and unsalted crackers. Include a nonelectric can opener. Stock up on canned pet food.
- **First aid kit.** Include all medicines you and your children are using, as well as a copy of the prescription (if you can). Include extra eye glasses, contact lens solution and tampons or sanitary pads.
- **Infant care.** Store baby formula and water to prepare it if a child is not

breastfed. Pack diapers and wipes and a hands-free infant carrier.

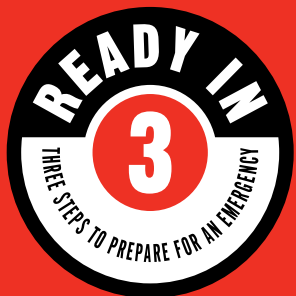
- **Household and sanitary supplies.** Include a whistle to signal for help, a battery-powered flashlight and radio with extra batteries, waterproof matches, moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties.
- **Other supplies.** Don't forget keys, credit cards and cash, cell phones and important papers.

**2. Make a plan.** Talk about potential disasters or emergencies and how to respond to each. Choose a meeting place, other than your home, for family

members to gather in case you can't go home. Identify a local and out-of-town emergency contact and teach your children the phone number for this person. Plan to bring your pet with you, because pets are unlikely to survive on their own.

**3. Be informed.** Know what natural or other disasters could occur where you live and how to prepare for them. Learn about emergency response plans where you live, such as evacuation routes and public shelter locations, as well as how you will be kept informed in an emergency. You can learn more about preparedness at [Ready.gov](http://Ready.gov).

## Three Steps for Emergency Preparedness



- 1. Get a kit**
- 2. Make a plan**
- 3. Be informed**

Learn more at  
[Health.Mo.Gov/emergencies/readyn3](http://Health.Mo.Gov/emergencies/readyn3)



# Emergency Kit Checklist

The following items should be part of your emergency kit and kept in a container that can be easily carried.

- Bottled water (One gallon of water per person per day, to last three days.)
- Canned or dried food (A three-day supply of non-perishable food items for each person. Remember a manual can opener.)
- Battery-powered radio
- Flashlight
- Extra batteries for radio and flashlight
- First-aid kit
- Prescription medicine
- Clean clothes and sturdy shoes
- Extra credit card
- Extra money
- Sturdy trash bags
- Formula and baby food if there is an infant in your home

Gather important papers and family information. Keep all important family papers in a safety deposit box or other safe location.

Make copies of papers you may need on hand in an emergency and keep them together, in one place, in case you have to “grab and go” during an evacuation.

Include:

- Identification for family and pets (for example, birth certificate, photo ID, driver’s license, passport, green card, pet license and vaccine record).
- Important personal papers, such as health insurance identification cards, immigration papers, children’s school records and the style and serial number of medical devices, such as pacemakers.
- List of family doctors.
- Copy of emergency plan and contacts.
- Local map.

## Breastfeeding during an emergency

When an emergency occurs, breastfeeding saves lives.

- Breastfeeding protects babies from the risks of a contaminated water supply.
- Breastfeeding helps protect against respiratory illnesses and diarrhea - diseases that can be fatal in populations displaced by disaster.

The basics of breastfeeding during an emergency are much the same as they are in normal times. Continuing to breastfeed whenever the baby seems hungry maintains a mother's milk supply and is calming to both mother and baby. Visit La Leche League International at [lalli.org](http://lalli.org) for information on how to breastfeed in an emergency even if you have been giving your baby formula.

## Food and water safety during an emergency

Food may not be safe to eat during and after an emergency. Water may not be safe to drink, clean with or bathe in after an emergency such as a hurricane or flood. This is because it may be contaminated with bacteria, sewage, agricultural or industrial waste, chemicals and other things that can cause illness or death. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has information about keeping your food and water safe at [CDC.gov/Natural-disasters/site.html](http://CDC.gov/Natural-disasters/site.html).

## Staying safe from violence during an emergency

After disasters, women are at greater risk of sexual assault or other violence. Visit [womenshealth.gov/blog/category/violence-against-women](http://womenshealth.gov/blog/category/violence-against-women) for safety tips.



## Feel Great: Quit Smoking

Most women who smoke say they want to quit. So how do you move from wanting to quit to actually quitting? A first step is to find reasons to quit that are important to you. Consider the many good reasons to quit smoking:

- Your health begins to improve the minute you stop smoking, and you begin to lower your long-term risk of many smoking-related diseases, including lung disease, cancer and heart disease.
- You will breathe more easily and have more energy.
- You will look and feel healthier overall.
- Your hair, breath and clothes will smell better.

- You won't need to leave your workplace, your home or other places to smoke.
- You won't need to worry about whether your smoke is bothering others or harming their health.
- The money you would have spent on cigarettes can be saved or used to buy other things.
- You become a role model to children and other smokers who want to quit.
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Millions of people have given up smoking for good, and you can too! To get started, pick a quit date and write it down. Before that day, get rid of all cigarettes, ashtrays and lighters everywhere you smoke. Do not allow anyone to smoke in your home.

Ask your doctor about medicines to help you quit, and seek counseling and support. Call:

- The National Cancer Institute at 877-44U-QUIT (877-448-7848) to talk to a counselor.
- 800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669 or TDD: 800-332-8615) for help within your state.

Visit [Women.Smokefree.gov](http://Women.Smokefree.gov) for more tips and resources to improve your chances of quitting for good. Freeing yourself of an expensive habit that threatens your health and the health of others will make you feel great!

## Stop smoking today!





MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH &  
SENIOR SERVICES**

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**Office on Women's Health**

P.O. Box 570  
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0570  
(573) 526-0445



**Scan to visit our Women's Health webpage at [Health.Mo.Gov](https://www.health.mo.gov).**

Individuals who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, or have a speech disability  
can dial 711 or 1-800-735-2966.