

Preventive Care for a Healthy Future

A Guide to Primary Care for People in their 20s and 30s



Health Quest Medical Practice (HQMP) is a multispecialty medical group dedicated to serving our communities.

HQMP connects you to one of the largest healthcare systems in the Mid-Hudson Valley and northwestern Connecticut. With more than 27 specialties and services, including primary care and gynecological and obstetrical services, you and your family have access to hundreds of top providers and specialists.

Whether you receive care at one of our four award-winning hospitals (Vassar Brothers Medical Center, Putnam Hospital Center, Northern Dutchess Hospital or Sharon Hospital) or at one of our many HQMP locations, you can expect to receive excellent, high-quality healthcare.

Preventive care helps keep you healthy today, and into the future

Preventive care helps protect you from developing illnesses and chronic diseases in the future. Preventive care may include blood pressure checks, annual flu shots and physicals.

In addition to helping you avoid health problems, preventive care catches medical conditions early, when they're easiest to treat. For example, when routine mammograms catch breast cancer early, at stage 0 or stage 1, five-year survival rates are nearly 100%; there is about a 72% survival rate for stage 3 (more advanced) breast cancer.¹

Other kinds of preventive care include regular checkups, vaccines, laboratory tests, educational counseling and screenings for cancer and other chronic diseases.

Don't wait until you have symptoms to see your doctor. With preventive care, you can protect your health now, and into the future.



The screenings and checkups you need to stay healthy in your 20s and 30s

When you see your primary care provider for regular preventive care, you'll receive some of the following routine screening tests.

General health/blood tests

- **Blood pressure:** High blood pressure raises your risk of stroke and heart attack; because it usually causes no symptoms, it's important to have it checked. Beginning at age 20, have your blood pressure measured every two years, or more often if it's high.¹¹
- **Body weight:** Being overweight or obese increases your chances of developing chronic diseases, which is why your doctor asks you to step on the scale during checkups.
- **Blood sugar:** Having excess sugar (glucose) in your blood raises your risk of type 2 diabetes. Your doctor may check your blood sugar if you are overweight or have a family history of diabetes.
- **HIV and other sexually transmitted infections:** Both partners should be tested before sexual intercourse. Testing is especially important if you have multiple partners, don't use condoms or share drug equipment.
- **Chlamydia test:** This sexually transmitted bacterial infection usually causes no symptoms. Have chlamydia tests yearly until age 25 if you're sexually active, and after age 25 if you have new or multiple partners.



The screenings and checkups you need to stay healthy in your 20s and 30s (cont'd)



Gynecology

- **Pelvic exam:** Your doctor may recommend pelvic exams during your yearly checkups.
- **Clinical breast exam:** Although the risk of breast cancer in women in their 20s and 30s is low, your doctor may perform clinical breast exams to check for lumps.
- **Birth control:** If you're sexually active, your doctor will talk with you about birth control options.
- **Pap test:** Women in their 20s and 30s should have a Pap test every three to five years.ⁱⁱⁱ Pap tests look for changes in the cells of your cervix that could lead to cervical cancer.
- **HPV test:** Viruses in the HPV family can cause cancers of the cervix, vagina, vulva, penis, anus, mouth and throat. In women, an HPV test might be used in combination with a Pap test to check for HPV.

Dermatology

- **Cancer checks:** Most skin cancers can be found early with skin checks by you and your doctor. If needed, your doctor will perform a skin biopsy.

The screenings and checkups you need to stay healthy in your 20s and 30s (cont'd)

Immunizations

Vaccines aren't just for kids. During your 20s and 30s, the following vaccines are recommended:^{iv}

- **Flu shot:** You should have one every year.
- **Tdap or Td** (tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis): You should have a booster shot every 10 years and during every pregnancy.
- **HPV vaccine:** For those who didn't receive it as a child, this vaccine is recommended for men 21 and under along with women through age 26.
- **Chickenpox vaccine:** Recommended if you didn't have it as a child.
- **Other vaccines:** If you have certain risk factors or health conditions, your doctor may recommend vaccines for other infections, such as meningitis or hepatitis A and B.



Cholesterol screening

Cholesterol is a waxy fat in your blood. Having unhealthy cholesterol levels raises your risk of heart disease. Beginning at age 20, have your cholesterol checked every four to six years.^v A cholesterol panel checks for total cholesterol, HDL, LDL and triglycerides.

Tips for staying healthy

- **Don't smoke or use tobacco.** Smoking can harm almost every organ in your body and shortens life expectancy by 10 years.^{vi} If you need help quitting, talk with your doctor or visit smokefree.gov.
- **Exercise regularly.** It's one of the best ways to prevent chronic health conditions. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity each week.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** You'll reduce your risk of killers such as heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes with a proper diet. Eat fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and legumes, and cut back on saturated fat, sugar, salt and excess calories.
- **Keep your weight down.** Gaining too much weight boosts your chances of developing type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, sleep apnea and other chronic conditions.
- **Drink only in moderation.** Stick with no more than one drink daily if you're a woman or two drinks daily if you're a man. Don't "binge drink."
- **Get help if you're addicted to drugs or alcohol.** Talk with your provider if you need help or a referral to an addiction program.
- **Speak up if you're depressed or thinking of harming yourself.** Suicide is the number 2 cause of death in adults age 25 to 34.^{vii} Talk with your doctor or call the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800.273.8255.
- **Shield your skin from the sun.** Most skin cancers are a direct result of exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation. Stay in the shade, wear a hat and slather on sunscreen.
- **Don't use indoor tanning beds.** UV exposure from tanning beds is raising the rates of melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, as well as other cancers in adolescents and young adults.
- **Manage stress.** Life can be very stressful in your 20s and 30s. Relax with exercise, meditation and spending time with friends and family.
- **Socialize with others.** Social isolation can have a surprisingly negative effect on your health. Join clubs or teams, attend meetups and get involved in your community.
- **Get enough sleep.** Most adults need seven to nine hours a night. Adopt good sleep hygiene habits, such as maintaining a regular sleep schedule, cutting back on caffeine late in the day and avoiding alcohol in the evening. Plus, power down your electronics before bed — the blue light they emit can keep you awake.
- **Use condoms.** Other than abstinence, nothing protects you from sexually transmitted infections better than condoms used correctly every time you have sex.

Prevention by the numbers

Highly preventable chronic diseases, such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes, are responsible for **7 of every 10** deaths among Americans and account for **75%** of the nation's healthcare spending.^{viii}

If everyone were vaccinated for human papillomavirus (HPV), cervical cancer rates would fall by as much as **90%**.^{ix}

Although cervical cancer is the most preventable form of female cancer, each year **12,000 women** in the United States get it and **4,000 women** die from it.^x

In children born after 1994, vaccines have prevented more than **332 million illnesses**, **21 million hospitalizations** and **732,000 deaths**.^{xi}

Almost **40%** of deaths in the United States could be postponed through better primary prevention.^{xii}

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