

# Well, Yes!



Many women only see their doctors when they are sick or injured, forming a negative connotation with doctor's visits; however, scheduling a yearly well-woman visit with your doctor is imperative in helping prevent and recognize disease, identify health issues, establish wellness goals, and build a relationship with your physician. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recognizes

the well-woman visit as a fundamental part of women's healthcare and wellness. Scheduling an appointment annually when you are not sick gives you time with your physician dedicated to maintaining your overall health by providing services based on your age, risk factors, and individual needs. So don't wait until you get sick! See your doctor regularly to help prevent illness and disease instead of just treating it.

## So what is a well-woman visit, anyway?

Though a well-woman visit may vary according to your doctor's preferences and your needs, most will be based around three goals: updating your health habits and history, providing a physical examination, and providing risk counseling and education to help create a set of health goals tailored to you. To get a better understanding of your overall health, your doctor will ask you questions pertaining to your family health history, your physical and mental health history, your diet and exercise habits, your sexual partners, and your use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

During the physical examination portion of your visit, your healthcare practitioner will likely measure your height and weight, calculate your BMI (body mass index) to determine if you are at a healthy weight, and check your blood pressure. Most women will also receive breast and pelvic exams and a Pap test.

- ▶ Clinical breast examinations are an important tool for early detection of breast cancer.
- ▶ Pelvic examinations include an inspection of the external genitalia, inspection of the vagina and cervix through the use of a speculum, and a manual inspection of the uterus and cervix to check for any abnormalities.
- ▶ The Pap test will be conducted while the speculum is in the vaginal canal; your doctor will collect cells from your cervix to be tested. Pap tests are instrumental in the prevention and early detection of cervical cancer.

## But what about the cost?

Due to the healthcare reform act known as the Affordable Care Act, well-woman visits are completely covered under most insurance plans. Several preventive screenings are also covered, so check your insurance plan to see what you are qualified for.

## Now get ready!

To be ready for your yearly well-woman visit, keep track of your personal health record, including a comprehensive family health history. Making a list of questions to ask your doctor during your visit can also be helpful, as it is easy to forget them during a short visit. You should also discuss with your doctor which screenings you may need. He or she may recommend screenings for HPV, sexually transmitted infections, different cancers, diabetes, or osteoporosis. Before you leave, try to schedule any recommended specialist or follow-up appointments so that you can stay on track.

