

# Monthly Wellness SpotLight by PSA

IN GOOD HEALTH

## YOUR ROUTINE PHYSICAL EXAMINATION AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT

No matter your age or stage of life, annual physical exams are essential to your ongoing health. Visiting your primary care provider for regular preventive care is one of the best ways to identify and treat health issues before they get worse. Here are five reasons why annual physical exams are important.

### Assessing Your Overall Health

Depending on your risk factors, age, lifestyle, and family history, your doctor may order a variety of blood tests and other screenings, including:

- **Blood pressure screening**—measurement of the force of your blood against your arteries (target: <130/80).
- **Cholesterol screening**—measurement of the amount of cholesterol in your blood. (target: <200 mg/dL). Target for LDL, or “bad” cholesterol: <130 mg/dL Target for HDL, or “good” cholesterol: >60 mg/dL
- **Blood glucose screening**—measurement of the amount of sugar in your blood (target: A1C < 5.7%). Target for fasting glucose level: <100.
- **Osteoporosis screening**—A DEXA scan is used to check for osteoporosis or osteopenia. It’s typically recommended for women starting at age 65 and for men starting at age 70.
- **Body mass index (BMI)**—This calculation, which uses your height and weight to determine if you’re at a healthy weight (target: 18.6 to 24.9).

These tests can identify serious underlying conditions, even if you aren’t experiencing symptoms. Your results also enable your doctor to make recommendations for follow-up testing or ways to improve your health.

### Updating Your Vaccinations

Vaccines aren’t just for kids. Your doctor will review your vaccination history and risk factors and may recommend immunizations, including:

- **Tdap vaccine**—a combination vaccine for tetanus, diphtheria and “whooping cough” and requires a booster for adults. Pregnant women should get a Tdap vaccine with every pregnancy.
- **Flu vaccine**—recommended each year for most people age 6 months and older.

- **HPV vaccine**—protects against cancers caused by human papillomavirus. Recommended for girls and boys ages 11 to 12. A catch-up HPV vaccination is recommended for all women and men up to age 26 and for adults ages 27 to 45 who haven’t previously or adequately received the vaccine.
- **Pneumonia vaccine**—If you have asthma, are a smoker, or are older than age 65, your doctor may recommend this vaccine to prevent lung infections.
- **Shingles vaccine**—recommended for most adults age 60 and older.
- **Hepatitis B vaccine**—recommended if you have diabetes or another condition that affects your immune system, work in the healthcare field, or live in a group environment such as a nursing home

### Screening for Cancer

Keeping up with routine cancer screenings can increase your chances of detecting cancer in the earliest stages, when it’s most treatable. Your doctor will consider your age and risk factors when recommending screenings.

### Updating Your Medical Records

A lot can change in a year, so it’s important to keep your medical records up to date. Your annual physical exam is the perfect time to let your primary care physician know about any changes that could affect your health, including medication changes, allergies, social history, mental health, and family history.

### Establishing a Relationship with Your Doctor

Your primary care practitioner is your healthcare partner, and an annual physical exam is a great way to get to know your doctor—and allow your doctor to get to know you. In addition to learning more about you and your lifestyle, your doctor will allow plenty of time to address any concerns or answer questions you may have about medications, treatment plans or other health issues.