

**Sexually Transmitted Infections.** STI's are transmitted by contact with skin, genitals, mouth, rectum or body fluids during sexual contact. If you were born between 1945 -1965, the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology recommends testing for Hepatitis C.

### **How can I protect myself from getting an STI?**

- Abstinence. The surest way to prevent an STI is not having any vaginal, anal or oral sex.
- Use condoms. Make sure that you and your partner use a condom from start to finish every time you have sex. Use a condom for vaginal, oral or anal sex.
- Avoid risky sex practices: sexual acts that tear or break the skin (especially anal sex) carry a higher risk of STI's. Having sex with an infected person raises your risk of getting a sexually transmitted infection.
- Get immunized. Vaccines are available for HPV and Hepatitis B. GARDASIL 9<sup>®</sup> is a vaccine that helps protect women against cancers of the cervix, vagina, vulva, and rectum. It also helps to protect against genital warts. It does NOT prevent all types of female cancers, so you will still need to have routine cervical cancer screens.

### **Pregnancy Prevention**

The best way to prevent pregnancy is not to have sex (abstinence). If you are having sex or thinking about becoming sexually active, talk to your health care provider about birth control options. There are many types of birth control.

- Barrier methods: Male or female condom, spermicide, sponge or cervical cap.
- Hormonal Contraception: the pill, patches, vaginal ring or injection
- Implants: IUD (intrauterine device), or the birth control implant
- Permanent sterilization: tubal occlusion for women; vasectomy for men
- Emergency contraception: Plan B, Ella to be used within 3-5 days of unprotected intercourse, Paragard IUD to be inserted within 5 days of unprotected intercourse.

**Pap Smear Screening.** During the Pap smear, your provider collects cells from the cervix (opening of the womb). The Pap smear screens for abnormal cells on the cervix that are cancerous or precancerous. If you're over age 30, you can have a Pap test every 5 years if you're tested at the same time for HPV. If you have an abnormal result, your provider may want to do additional tests or screen you more frequently. You may not need pap smears anymore if you have had a hysterectomy with removal of the cervix, or if you are over age 65.

**Intimate Partner Violence.** Intimate partner violence (also called domestic violence) is a pattern of controlling or threatening behavior that a woman experiences from her spouse or intimate partner. If you are in a relationship that is threatening or harmful, the first step is to tell someone about it. Please contact one of these resources or talk to your provider.

Emerge – 888-428-0101, [www.emergecenter.org](http://www.emergecenter.org). (The largest domestic abuse shelter and provider of services in Southern Arizona), [www.thehotline.org](http://www.thehotline.org), Safe line: 800-799-SAFE (7233)

**Breast Cancer Screening.** A mammogram is an x-ray of the breasts to screen for breast cancer. The mammogram can often detect breast cancers that are too small to feel on exam. Mammograms start at age 40 for the general population and are done every 1-2 years. If you have a personal or family history of



## Well Woman Exam 40 Years and Older

---

breast cancer, you may be asked to have additional screening exams, such as MRI. Be sure to discuss family history of breast cancer with your provider.

**Nutrition and Fitness.** Good nutrition and regular exercise will help you feel great, have more energy, and improve your health. Follow these nutrition/fitness tips:

- Eat a variety of foods including fruits, vegetables, grains, lean proteins, and low fat dairy
- Cut down on fats and sugars, such as candy, sodas, chips, fries and “junk food”
- Get at least half an hour of exercise every day
- If you are overweight, work with your doctor to achieve a healthy weight
- Learn more about healthy eating and get a personalized meal plan from the USDA My Plate Plan: <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/MyPlatePlan>

**Heart Disease Prevention.** Heart disease is the number one killer for American women. To lower your risk for heart disease, do not smoke, eat a diet that is low in saturated fat, lose weight if needed, and keep physically active. See your primary care provider at least yearly for blood pressure and cholesterol checks. To find out more about cardiovascular disease, go to: <https://www.womenshealth.gov/heart-disease-and-stroke>

**Menopause.** Menopause is a natural transition in a woman’s life where the ovaries stop making estrogen. Menopause usually happens gradually over a period of several years. However, menopause can happen suddenly if the ovaries are removed surgically. Common symptoms of menopause include changes in the menstrual cycle, hot flashes, night sweats and vaginal dryness. Discuss any symptoms that are bothering you with your provider.

**Colon Cancer Screening.** Colon cancer screening should begin at age 50. A colonoscopy is the gold standard to detect abnormalities in the colon. It is best to have a colonoscopy initially and if it is normal, the next test could be a Cologard (a stool based test). It can be done every 3 years.

**Bone Density Screening.** The National Osteoporosis Foundation recommends bone density screening after age 65. The dexa scan is an x-ray of the hips and back that help determine your risk for breaking bones. Your provider may order a dexa scan before age 65 if you have additional risk factors for osteoporosis. Regular, weight-bearing exercise, in which your bones are supporting your body weight, can help prevent osteoporosis. Consuming enough Calcium and Vitamin D in your diet can also help prevent loss of bone density. If you have osteoporosis, your provider may discuss medications to help prevent rapid bone loss.

### Helpful Resources for Women

College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists: <https://www.acog.org/Patients>

U.S. Department of Health, Office on Women’s Health: <https://womenshealth.gov>