

Top 5 Threats to Your Health and What You Can Do

1. Cancer

- **Lung cancer**- Lung cancer is the leading killer of women ages 55-64. If you have smoked the equivalent of 1 pack/day for 30 years and are over 55, discuss the option of a low-dose CT scan to try to detect lung cancer earlier.

- **Breast cancer**- Have a mammogram every 2 years (doing one yearly doesn't decrease risk of dying from breast cancer but does increase the chance of false positive tests).

- **Colon cancer**- Colonoscopy (telescope exam of the large intestine) starting at 50 and repeated every 10 years (if normal) or a yearly stool test for blood can catch small growths before they can turn cancerous

- **Cervical cancer**- Pap tests are only needed every 5 years if both the pap and HPV test are normal.

- **Ovarian cancer**- There is unfortunately no good test that catches ovarian cancer at an early stage.

- Eat a **healthy diet**, low in saturated fat and high in fruits and vegetables. No vitamin or supplement has been shown to decrease the risk of cancer.

2. Chronic Lung Disease

- **Quit smoking**. Smoking causes earlier and more severe emphysema in women compared to men. Lung disease is the 4th leading cause of death in women this age. It is never too late to stop ongoing lung damage. Ask about options to help you quit. Get treated if you have symptoms (shortness of breath, chronic cough, wheezing)

3. Heart Disease and Stroke

- **Don't smoke**. Quitting cuts your chance of a heart attack by half after 1 year.

- **Blood pressure** – check yearly and treat if high (over 140/90)

- **Cholesterol** – check every 5 years, more often if high

- **Diabetes**- check every 3 years if at risk or if runs in family

- **Know your risk**- check out Reynoldsriskscore.com and westernstroke.org/personalstrokerisk1.xls

- if your heart risk is over 20% or if you have diabetes, kidney problems or have had heart problems, take a statin cholesterol medicine

- if your stroke risk is over 3% (55 and over) or 9% (60 and over) and you don't have risk factors for stomach bleeding, take a 81mg aspirin daily

- **Know the symptoms** and don't wait to call for help

A heart attack can cause pain, heaviness, or pressure in the chest, but half of women get no chest pain. Shortness of breath, nausea, dizziness and sweating can also occur.

A stroke or brain attack can start as sudden weakness on one side of the body, difficulty speaking, understanding, or walking. If you think you may be having a heart attack or stroke, call 911; the longer symptoms occur, the more damage can be done

4. Hip fracture /accidents

- Have a bone density test if you have risk factors (past fracture, heavy alcohol use, family history of osteoporosis, thin build) that give you over a 9% risk of having a fracture (see shef.ac.uk/FRAX)

- Get 1200mg/day of calcium and 800 units of Vitamin D each day through diet or supplements (take with food)

- Stay active doing weight bearing exercise (walk, run, etc)

5. Depression - If life is getting you down, let us know.

6. Plan for the end of life

- Have a Living Will and/or Power of Attorney for Health

Recommendations for Healthy Living

1. Don't smoke. Ask if you need help quitting
2. Maintain a healthy weight.
3. Eat healthy foods. Eat lots of fruits, vegetables and fiber.
Eat less animal fat and processed foods
4. Exercise. Get on your feet! Work up to walking or moderate exercise 30 minutes at least 5 days a week.
5. Listen to your body-- when things aren't right, get it checked out
6. Know your medications- bring them to appointments.
Check to see if your OTC meds and supplements are safe
7. Get enough sleep and avoid over the counter sleep aides
8. Get help if you are in an abusive relationship
9. Limit alcohol to 1 drink a day. Ask for help if alcohol has become a problem for you.
10. Let us know if you feel depressed for more than 2 weeks or if you feel like not living anymore.

Prevent problems now

Immunizations

- tetanus-pertussis – every 10 years
- flu shot- yearly
- pneumonia vaccine- if you have a chronic illness
- shingles vaccine – one time at 60

Blood tests

- cholesterol- at least every 5 years
- blood sugar- if overweight or diabetes in family
- Hepatitis C, HIV test- one time for all baby boomers

Cancer screening

- Colonoscopy- every 10 years or as recommended
- Pap + HPV test- every 5 years

Bone density test – at 55 if at risk

Our Goal... Your Good Health

**Recommendations for Healthy Living
from Your Family Physician**

Women 50 to 64

**Forum Family Medicine
Specializing in You and Your Family**

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