Reading: Routine Checkups

Website excerpt

Welcome to www.annualcheckups.org. The main aim of our website is to offer advice on the required or recommended check-ups that everyone should have annually. You will learn why you should treat check-ups as a mandatory activity and depending on whether you are a woman or man which diseases you can screen for. Moreover, you will obtain information on how to prepare to a check-up so that it is effective and reliable.

Why check-ups matter

Is there anything more important than your health and the health of your relatives? Of course there isn’t, so it’s time you took charge of your health and scheduled an appointment with your doctor to discuss the tests and screenings you need. This will help identify health problems before they start or at their early stage, when you have better chances for a successful treatment. This is the best thing you can do to stay healthy!

How should I prepare?

First of all you need to review your family health history. It is one of the most important risk factors for serious health problems such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cancer. When you present your family health history to your specialist, they will assess the risk of a disease and recommend measures you can take to prevent it, such as doing exercise, changing your diet and so on.

What are the fundamental things to check?

Regardless of your gender, the one thing you should get is an annual blood test. It is the most important step an adult person can take to prevent life-threatening diseases, as its results can help you notice any critical changes in your body before they manifest as a serious health issue.

There are many blood tests you can get, but the most important ones are the complete blood count, the chemistry panel and the fibrinogen. Let’s now explain what each procedure involves. The complete blood count offers information on the number, percentage and concentration of platelets, red blood cells, and white blood cells. Therefore, it is useful in the detection of such health disorders as an infection and anemia.

The chemistry panel gives information on such parameters as total cholesterol, high-density and low-density lipo-protein (HDL and LDL) or blood glucose. This can help detect problems such as diabetes and coronary artery disease.
The fibrinogen level test’s importance cannot be underestimated as well. The level of fibrinogen increases when tissue inflammation occurs, and since atherosclerosis and heart disease are inflammatory processes, this test can help assess the risk of heart disease and stroke.

With the blood test done, you should also screen for various types of cancer, some of which may affect both men and women, e.g. colorectal cancer. There are a few screening methods to detect it, of which colonoscopy is most accurate. You should have the test done if you are over 50, or younger if there were cases of colorectal cancer in your family.

One other thing everyone should monitor regardless of their gender is their Body Mass Index - BMI. With obesity being a serious social issue in developed countries, it’s good to be aware whether you are overweight and should think about your diet more carefully. You don’t need to consult a specialist in order to calculate your BMI - simply use the calculator that can be found in the ‘Extras’ section of our website.

**I am a woman, what should I check?**

If you are a female, then apart from the aforementioned tests and screenings, you should have a BRCA genetic test done. This is the test of two genes, BRCA 1 and BRCA 2, which are responsible for the production of tumor suppressor protein. When these genes are mutated or altered in any way, cells are more likely to develop genetic abnormalities leading to cancer, in particular breast cancer. Another type of cancer that women should screen for is cervical cancer. The test which facilitates its detection is called a Pap smear and it should be done every three years.

**I am a man, what should I check?**

If you are over 50, you should definitely get screened for abdominal aortic aneurysm, especially if you have ever been a smoker. Abdominal aortic aneurysm, or AAA for short, is a bulging in the body’s largest artery - the abdominal aorta. AAA may burst which can result in severe bleeding or even death. To verify whether you are at risk of AAA occurrence, you can have ultrasound examination done, which is absolutely painless.

A type of cancer that is male-specific is called prostate cancer. The test commonly used to screen for it is called DRE, which stands for digital rectal exam. It involves a manual examination of the rectum to estimate the size of the prostate and feel for any lumps or abnormalities.

**Discussion Questions**

What are the fundamental tests and screenings recommended for both men and women?

What male-specific and female-specific check-ups are mentioned in the article?

What are the benefits of having regular check-ups?