

Regular health screenings can save lives

By Lisa Carbonell

One important component to living a long and healthy life is to get preventive health screening for serious diseases. If your doctor finds a disease early, it's often easier to treat and may cause less damage.



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In addition to celebrating milestone birthdays as celebrations, consider them reminders for important health checks. Here's a timeline for health screenings through the decades:

- **Cervical cancer.** The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recommends screening every three to five years for women who have always had normal PAP tests, starting at age 21. If you have had a history of abnormal PAP tests, you may have a different schedule.
- **Cholesterol.** Baseline testing in your 20s is recommended to screen for inherited cholesterol disorders. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommends that average-risk women resume screening by age 45 and women at higher risk resume screening by age 30.
- **Breast cancer.** This screening uses imaging to detect breast cancer when it may be too small to find in a

clinical breast exam. The ACOG recommends starting clinical breast exams at age 25. Average-risk women should start getting annual mammograms at age 40, no later than age 50. Talk with your doctor about frequency, as well as other possible testing if you have a family history of breast cancer.

- **Diabetes.** The American Diabetes Association (ADA) suggests that average-risk women be screened for diabetes by age 45. Consider starting at a younger age if you're overweight and/or have other factors that put you at risk for diabetes, such as family history, high cholesterol, or high blood pressure.
- **Colorectal cancer.** The American Cancer Society (ACS) suggests that women be screened for colorectal cancer starting at age 50. The gold standard diagnostic test is the colonoscopy. If no precancerous polyps are found, you may only need this test once every 10 years.
- **Osteoporosis.** The USPSTF suggests that women be screened for osteoporosis starting at age 65. Your doctor might advise you to start earlier if you are at high risk for bone loss or have had a broken bone.

Screening tests are just one step you can take to prevent disease later in life. Other crucial steps include:

- Scheduling annual physical exams
- Avoiding tobacco and illicit drug use
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Eating a healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat dairy
- Getting at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week
- If you drink alcohol, drink in moderation.

Lisa Carbonell is an OB-GYN at Barton Women's Health. Join clinicians from Barton Women's Health and Barton Medical Imaging on Oct. 4 at 6pm for a free wellness lecture to learn how Barton Health's new 3D tomosynthesis mammogram machine is

taking mammography screenings to the next level.