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# Stay on top of breast health and screenings

## You can make a difference

There are ways to improve your odds against getting breast cancer. A healthy diet and exercise get you off to a great start. So do yearly checkups and recommended screenings.

## Five ways to lower your risk

Some healthy-living tips may help lower your risk for breast cancer:

- 1. Watch your weight.** It's important to stay at the right body weight for your height and age. Overweight women have higher estrogen levels. This increases their cancer risk.
- 2. Get physical.** Working out helps lower body fat. Less fat means less risk. One hour a day can help lower breast cancer risk by 20 percent. But even 30 minutes a day can improve your chances.
- 3. Cut back on alcohol.** Limit yourself to one drink a day. Compared to women who don't drink, women who have three or more drinks a day may double their risk.
- 4. Don't smoke.** Smoking cigarettes raises your risk. If you are a smoker, think about getting help to kick the habit.
- 5. Get your checkups and screenings.** Discuss what's right for you with your doctor.

Age	Professional exam	Mammogram
<b>Under 40</b>	Talk to your doctor about whether you need an exam.	Unless there is a high risk, most experts recommend against regular mammograms for younger women.  Your doctor may ask you to get one if there is a lump or other concern.
<b>40 – 49</b>	Many doctors suggest a yearly exam.	Some medical experts suggest a yearly mammogram. Others say it is optional for women in this age group.
<b>50 – 74</b>	Many doctors suggest a yearly exam.	Doctors suggest having one at least every 2 years.
<b>75 and older</b>	Talk with your doctor.	

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## Heading off cervical cancer

### What causes cervical cancer?

Most often, infection with a virus known as human papillomavirus (HPV). You can get HPV by having sexual contact with someone who has the virus.

**Prevention tip #1:** Protect yourself against HPV infection. Talk to your doctor, especially about the HPV vaccine.

### How does it grow?

Slowly. It begins with small changes in the cells that line the cervix. It can stay in this early stage for 2 to 10 years before invading nearby tissue.

**Prevention tip #2:** Find and treat these small changes early. Talk to your doctor about pelvic exams and Pap tests.

### HPV vaccine

Ask your doctor if it is right for you. He or she will give you the shot based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations.

**For:** Girls and women under the age of 26, starting at age 11 or 12

**What's recommended:** A series of 3 shots over 6 months

**Note:** The vaccine is most effective if you get it before exposure to HPV (before you are sexually active). This is why the CDC recommends it for girls as young as 11.

### Pelvic exam and Pap test

**If you get the vaccine, it is still important to get regular pelvic exams and Pap tests.** The exams and screenings are your second line of defense.

During a pelvic exam, a doctor checks your reproductive organs to make sure they are healthy. A Pap test is part of a pelvic exam. This simple test looks for changes in the cervix that may lead to cancer.

**For:** Women 21 years of age and older. Ask your doctor what's right for you.

#### What's recommended:

Pelvic exam — usually once a year

Pap test — every 1 – 3 years based on age, risk factors and earlier Pap results

**Good news:** Pap tests can help spot cervical changes early. And abnormal tests do not automatically mean cancer. In fact, removing abnormal cells early can help prevent cancer from developing and spreading.

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