

Get the Most Out of Your Annual Physical: 10 Questions to Ask at Your Appointment

Your annual check-up is a prime opportunity to strengthen a vital partnership with your healthcare provider and assess your health and wellness. Dr. Randall Fenton, a Family Medicine PCP and the newest member of Steward Medical Group, shares 10 questions you can ask to get the most out of your check up.

COVER YOUR BASES

“It’s helpful to think of your physical as a two-part process. First, of course, is the exam itself. The second part is a conversation with your doctor to thoroughly understand your health,” explained Dr. Fenton. “You are an important part of your care team. Discussing your concerns and asking questions are essential to understanding your health and mapping your plan for personal wellness.”

The following questions provide a great check list of reference topics to cover during your appointment. You can pick and choose based on your personal health.

1. Are all my signs normal or within accepted limits? Ask about your:

- Body-mass index (BMI), a formula that tells if your weight is appropriate for your height.
- Blood pressure and pulse to see if your heart is beating irregularly and if your blood pressure is higher than normal (120/80 mm Hg).
- Breathing to learn if your lungs are working efficiently or if your breathing sounds shallow, labored or rapid.
- Skin tone and nails, their color, texture and appearance give clues to underlying disorders of your vital organs.

2. Is my health better, the same or worse since my last checkup?

3. What are the best ways I can maintain my health or manage my condition? Ask for advice on:

- Dietary intake to be sure you’re avoiding high-fat, high-calorie meals and aren’t overdoing alcohol.
- Physical activities to help prevent disease or manage a chronic condition.
- Stress-management tips to ease chronic tension and anxiety that send blood pressure soaring and create a host of other ills.



Randall C. Fenton, MD, PCP, Family Medicine

4. Given my personal and family medical history, do I have a higher than normal risk for certain illnesses? Review with your doctor:

- Your family medical history, which shows if grandparents, parents or siblings had heart attacks, strokes, breast or prostate cancers and other illnesses.
- Your personal medical history, which may include a childhood history of sunburn, severe allergies or high fevers that are risk factors for diseases later in life. It shows if you were hospitalized, had surgery or tested positive for allergies to drugs or food.

5. Given my age and health, what are my primary health concerns and what symptoms may indicate the onset of an illness?

6. Given my medical status, what specific symptoms may indicate a health emergency?

7. What screenings should I have? Depending on your age and risk factors, your doctor may recommend a mammogram for breast cancer, a bone density scan for osteoporosis, a colonoscopy for colorectal cancer, a blood test for prostate-specific antigens that may indicate prostate cancer, a pap smear to look for irregular cervical cells, or blood tests for cholesterol and other markers for cardiovascular disease.

8. Should I be seeing a specialist for any reason?

9. Are there any new therapies or changes in treatment since my last checkup that I should know about?

10: Are the vitamins/supplements I am taking safe and appropriate? Are there any you suggest?

BE INFORMATIVE

“Last but not least, it is imperative that you also mention any current symptoms or unusual feelings — physical or emotional — that you may be experiencing,” reminds Dr. Fenton. “Never let embarrassment, fear or shame keep you from telling your doctor about a problem. We are trained to handle all your medical concerns—and you won’t be the first patient with a sensitive issue.”

Likewise, contact your doctor’s office any time you have a question about your health or are having trouble adhering to his or her instructions. “Open communication is the foundation to every physician-patient relationship,” said Dr. Fenton. “This is just as important as eating right, exercising and watching your weight.”



Dr. Fenton is accepting new patients. See page 10 for his profile. To schedule an appointment with Dr. Fenton or another Steward Medical Group physician in your community, please visit [DoctorFinder at www.Steward.org/doctorfinder](http://DoctorFinder.at) or call **800-488-5959**.