

10 Questions to Ask Your Doctor

By Nawar Najjar, MD, Primary Care Physician

Your annual checkup should be more than a quick exam and a “See you next year!” It’s your chance to strengthen a vital relationship with your doctor and gain a thorough understanding of your health. Here are some questions you should ask during your annual visit:

1. Are all of my signs normal or within accepted limits? Ask about your:
 - body-mass index (BMI), a formula that tells you if your weight is appropriate for your height
 - blood pressure and pulse (to see if your heart is beating regularly and your blood pressure is within the normal range)
 - breathing (to learn if your lungs are working efficiently)
2. Is my health better, the same or worse since my last checkup?
3. How can I maintain my health or manage my condition? Ask for advice on:
 - your diet (to be sure you’re making appropriate nutritional choices)
 - physical activities (to help prevent disease or manage a chronic condition)
 - stress-management tips (to ease chronic tension and anxiety that can elevate your blood pressure)
4. Given my medical history, do I have a higher than normal risk for certain illnesses? Speak with your doctor about:
 - your family medical history, which shows if grandparents, parents or siblings had heart attacks, strokes, cancers and other illnesses
 - your personal medical history, including childhood allergies or conditions that could be risk factors for diseases later in life
5. Given my age and health, 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? Your doctor may recommend a mammogram for breast cancer, a bone density scan for osteoporosis, a colonoscopy or sigmoidoscopy for colorectal cancer, or blood tests for cholesterol and other markers for cardiovascular disease.
8. Is there any reason I should be seeing a specialist?
9. Are there any new therapies or changes in treatment since my last visit that should I know about?
10. Am I up-to-date on all of my immunizations and shots? If you are visiting your doctor in the fall or early winter, ask about getting a flu shot.

Be sure to also mention any current symptoms or unusual feelings - physical or emotional - that you may be experiencing. 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. Communicating openly and honestly with your doctor is just as important as eating right, exercising and watching your weight.

If you are in need of a primary care doctor or specialist, call Steward DoctorFinder at 800-488-5959 to find one in your community.

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

Among cancers that affect both men and women, colorectal cancer (cancer of the colon or rectum) is the second leading cancer killer in the U.S. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), every year, about 140,000 Americans are diagnosed with colorectal cancer, and more than 50,000 people die from it. However, it is largely preventable with early screening and detection.

Be sure to talk to your doctor about your colorectal cancer risk and whether or not you should be screened.

Dr. Najjar is accepting new patients at Steward Medical Group Middleboro Internal Medicine. To make an appointment with Dr. Najjar, call 508-923-6471.

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