

You're an active woman who feels healthy, gets plenty of exercise and stays on top of nutrition news (like the kind you find in *Energy Times*). But you're about to hit the half-century mark and may not have visited your health practitioner lately. Without the information you can only get from a head-to-toe physical exam you won't really know where you stand healthwise. So stop telling everyone how busy you are (who isn't these days?) and go get that checkup on the items in our helpful chart. You know you should!

TEETH:

Untreated gum disease has been linked to heart woes; scientists think low-level inflammation is involved. So say "aah" in the dentist's chair at least once—preferably twice—a year.

EYES:

The reason that text gets fuzzy around this time is *presbyopia*, the farsightedness associated with age—reading glasses should help bring things back into focus. More worrisome is the presence of *glaucoma*, a condition in which increased pressure within the eyeball can threaten vision. Some experts recommend yearly testing.

THYROID:

Are you among the perpetually pooped? Your thyroid gland, the body's master energy controller, may be to blame. The American Thyroid Association suggests an initial check at age 35 and rechecks every five years afterwards.

HEART:

Have your blood pressure checked by a professional at least once every two years, more often if you have a family history of hypertension. Have your cholesterol levels (total, "bad" LDL, "good" HDL and triglycerides) checked every three years. A blood-sugar (glucose) test is part of the bloodwork package.

BREASTS:

Breast cancer—it's every woman's biggest fear. At this point mammography is still the gold standard for screening, although other tests are being developed. Go once every year or every other year, depending on your risk factors (that includes living in an area shown to have a high rate of breast malignancies).

REPRODUCTIVE TRACT:

Keep going for Pap smears until age 70. The frequency will depend on whether abnormalities are found—talk to your practitioner. There is no standard screening test for ovarian cancer; discuss getting CA-125 checks if you have a family history.

LIVER:

Standard bloodwork includes a liver-enzyme check. This should be done every three years, more often if you have a history of heavy alcohol use.

BONES:

Most women don't have to start going for bone density scans until age 65. You may have to start earlier if you have risk factors (i.e., small frame, low body weight, family history).

LARGE INTESTINE:

Once thought of as a "man's disease," colorectal cancer now affects more women than men. A colonoscopy, in which a lighted tube is used to examine the entire colon, is the most inclusive test; once every 10 years starting at age 50 is recommended. Other tests are available; speak with your practitioner.

To get the most from your annual checkup, you should:

- Create a list of health concerns for discussion with your practitioner, including illnesses suffered by close relatives.
- Provide a complete list of all medications and supplements you are currently taking.
- Be totally honest about lifestyle choices, such as smoking or excessive alcohol usage, that can affect your health.
- Obtain a copy of all paperwork for your personal files.

Energy Times Health Chart

Note: Screening frequencies are for healthy individuals with no known risk factors. If you have a pre-existing condition or are at risk for one, follow your practitioner's recommendations.

Talking Stock at 50