

## Q. Why should I see a doctor once a year?

**A.** You don't know what you don't know. Going to your doctor once a year might seem like a waste of time, especially if you're healthy.

But what if you're not as healthy as you think? You could be at risk for health problems like heart disease, diabetes, obesity, or cancer and not know it. If you are at risk, the sooner you do something about it, the better.

Here's just one reason an annual doctor visit is a good idea. More than 1 in 3 adults in the United States has pre-diabetes.<sup>1</sup> Over time, they could develop diabetes, heart disease, or stroke.

But most people don't know their blood glucose (sugar) level. Do you? You can't know if it's higher than normal by looking in a mirror. Pre-diabetes often doesn't have any symptoms. And it's not the only health problem like that. In other words, what you don't know can be bad for your health.

Simple tests and a talk with your doctor once a year about your health and lifestyle can be good for your overall well-being. Here's what you can expect during an annual doctor's visit:<sup>2</sup>

✓ **Check blood pressure.** About 75 million adults in the United States have high blood pressure. Only about half have it under



control. And many others don't even know they have high blood pressure. Keeping your blood pressure in check will help prevent heart disease...the leading cause of death in the U.S.

- ✓ **Calculate Body Mass Index.** Are you overweight or obese? It's a risk factor for a long list of health problems like heart disease, diabetes, certain types of cancer, joint pain, and arthritis. And it can have an impact on your quality of life. A healthy Body Mass Index (BMI) is 18.5 to 24.9.
- ✓ **Screen for certain types of cancer.** Almost 40 percent of adults will be diagnosed with cancer at some point in their lives.<sup>3</sup> The most common cancers include breast, lung, prostate,

## ASK THE *Wellness* DOCTOR

and colorectal. Not all cancers are preventable or treatable. But many are. Your age, gender, family history, and lifestyle – such as tobacco use – are factors your doctor will consider to screen for cancer.

- ✓ **Test your blood.** A simple blood test is often part of an annual doctor's visit. Why? It's an easy way to identify risk factors for chronic diseases such as diabetes and Hepatitis C. Common tests include glucose, cholesterol, and triglycerides. But your doctor can also order tests for other things to evaluate your health.

Want to be healthier, live longer, and lower your risk for chronic disease? See your doctor once a year for a check-up. It's a simple way to protect your health.

### References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016). High blood pressure fact sheet. From: <https://tinyurl.com/hr6gayse>
2. U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. (2019). USPSTF A and B recommendations. From: <https://tinyurl.com/y9hokww5>
3. National Cancer Institute. (2018). Cancer statistics. From: <https://tinyurl.com/n4ffrbg>

